THE LONDON PERAMBULATOR

by

JAMES BONE

Illustrated with drawings by

MUIRHEAD BONE

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THE
LONDON PERAMBULATOR

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THIS is an unusual London book, being the outcome of much selection from what seemed memorable among the impressions and ideas of twenty years of London life. Muirhead Bone is known as one of the most distinguished living etchers, and his reputation was first established by his London etchings and drawings. James Bone is the author of *Edinburgh Revisited*, a study of Edinburgh life and architecture, and as a journalist he has studied the character and moods of London by day and night. Although no one can know very much about the world of London, he has seen it in his own way, and attempts to render his personal London to others. Except incidentally, he avoids history and everything that a guide book gives. But the London reader may find, when he lays down the book, that he now knows and feels London as he never did before, and the stranger may find that he knows something of London and the Londoners as the denizens know them.

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THE CITY FROM THE STRAND

JAMES BONE

THE LONDON PERAMBULATOR

'What a bounteous banquet of costly viands is spread before an ardent-minded, grateful-spirited Perambulator!'

Old Humphrey's Walks in London

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With pictures by

MUIRHEAD BONE

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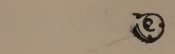

To

THE ISLE OF PORTLAND

The Matrix of London's Grandeur

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	PREFACE	11
I	THE FACE OF LONDON	13
II	PORTLAND STONE	31
III	A LONDON CALENDAR	47
IV	THE FOUR INNS	61
V	LONDONERS	77
VI	THE CLUB STREETS	103
VII	SHOPS	113
VIII	THE STREET OF THE GIANT GOOSEBERRY	131
IX	NORTH O' EUSTON	143
X	BARGEES AND WATERMEN	149
XI	THE ROAD VIEW AND THE AIR VIEW	161
XII	'GONE!'	167

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE CITY FROM THE STRAND	*Frontispiece*	
WATERLOO BRIDGE	*Facing page*	34
THE END OF THE CIRCUS		40
THE HORSE GUARDS		52
LONDON, N.W.		56
KING'S BENCH WALK, TEMPLE		64
BLOOMSBURY		78
THE CENOTAPH, 1919		86
PICCADILLY NIGHT – THE SAVILE CLUB		104
BERRY'S SHOP		114
ST. PAUL'S OVER AMEN CORNER		138
NORTH O' EUSTON		146
THE SHOT TOWER		152
PORTLAND PLACE		162
DISSOLUTION OF EGYPTIAN HALL		168
DAWN, NEWGATE PRISON		176

PREFACE

ONE NOVEMBER AFTERNOON A CHILD WAS LOOKING OUT OF the window in my Temple attic. Suddenly she asked, 'Whose keys are those on your tree?' Looking out at the bare elm tree, blotted by starlings sounding their ringing note, I discerned a bunch of three old keys hanging on a bough. How long they had been there one could not say. They hung on a little top bough. I said, of course :

'Those are the Keys of London.'

'Who put them there? How do you get them? Can you go in anywhere with them? Are they the birds' keys?' asked the child.

A long time afterwards I was wakened one morning by shouts and swishing noises and cracks. The elm tree in King's Bench Walk that had changed very little since the days when the old gate-porter, looking on at its fall, had been Dickens's office-boy, was now a stump. Its crown was on the ground. I thought of the little girl and with some curiosity went down to get the Keys of London. But they had vanished. Some alarmed starling must have gone off with them to the trees of the Savoy Chapel, or to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where the trees look like forest trees. The Keys of London were gone.

One likes to suppose that there could be such keys, keys to unlock the heart of London. How invaluable to a topographer of her moods and secrets! But failing such keys, one must perambulate early and late in all weathers, to know a little about London – no one can know much more than a little about London. One must know St. Paul's in all lights and must never walk east on the south side of Fleet Street like the beasts that perish; one must know and love the empty muted handsomeness of the Bayswater and Regent's Park terraces in the summer

dawn; one must have studied the backs of London which differ from all other backs of great cities, especially the lordly and explanatory backs of Stratford Place over the huddle of little depreciating buildings; and the shadowy back of the Waterloo Bridge Road houses as they rise from the obscure river-side region, dark and sheer but for the line of protuberant balcony-hutches at the end of which on a sooty rope a monkey sometimes swings; one must know the sallow squares and courts of Mayfair with little dubious shops in their mewses that sell truffles and forced fruit for expensive houses that have 'run short'; one must know something of the waukrife London that the homeless perpetually cross and recross, the blanched dreary streets when you have seen

> '. . . the old things come creeping through
> Another night that London knew.'

And you must have rejoiced in Piccadilly and the Strand when the May sun was shining and everybody's eyes were bright.

But even if one knows all that and much more, one knows only a little of London. These pages are some of the experiences and fancies gathered in twenty years of London life. The artist and writer planned this book many years ago, and since then Nash's Regent Street is gone; Gilbert's Eros has been banished from Piccadilly Circus; our noble Waterloo Bridge is fighting for existence against an astigmatic Council; and, while Wren's City churches are in danger from their own guardians his mighty St. Paul's Cathedral is sinking. So we must out with our testimony of the London that the sun shone on in the first quarter of the twentieth century – even though it read like an obituary.

JAMES BONE

THE FACE OF LONDON

I

'LONDON!' IT HAS THE SOUND OF DISTANT THUNDER. ONLY one other great capital has its might reverberating in its name. Rome – Roma, however you say it, sounds like the shout of legions or long waves breaking on the shore. London with its equipoise of syllables seems to hold its power, to impend, almost to threaten. To some it sounds like a warning, to some like applause, but always distant, distant. How the name rolls over the country calling up the recruits! And how did it sound in alien ears, to the generations of exiles who have sought shelter here through the ages: the Dutch refugees who were given the church of Austin Friars; the Huguenots driven out by the Catholics, the Catholic *émigrés* fleeing from the revolutionaries, the Communists fleeing from the Republicans, all to settle and mingle in Soho; the Italian liberators; the Russian

revolutionaries fleeing from the Czarists, the Czarists in turn fleeing from the Bolsheviki; then the coming of the refugee Belgians in their thousands. To them all the growl of London must have softened to a purr.

If the name suggests thunder and its association of darkness and vastness and the beauty of lightning, something of that may be found in the inchoate, interminable, soot-darkened mass of London itself, assembled without plan or control, with its sudden apparitions of grace and beauty springing so often out of its obstruction and confusion. Unlike other royal capitals, the replanning and ornamentation of the capital, so popular and pardonable an extravagance of continental monarchs, have not been practised here, and London owes little beyond its parks, and a few buildings to the Court. The genius of the people for half-measures and compromise and distrust of logic and symmetry has resulted in nearly all the finest things being half reluctantly displayed and rarely connected in an architectural effect. The winding of the river Thames creates curious topographical illusions by which St. Paul's and the Abbey seem constantly to be appearing and reappearing in the wrong places. Then, there are the weathering idiosyncrasies of Portland stone, of which the chief London buildings are made, which creates a world of shadows and high lights all of its own. These are the ever-salient factors that profoundly affect the form and complexion of London, adding mystery to all her qualities.

London differs organically from other ancient capitals. It has not the grand scale planning and uniform dignity of façade of the main part of Paris, nor the grandeur of stupendous building and flashing fountain that still is Rome, nor the wooded hand-

someness and drilled impressiveness of Berlin, nor the gaiety of baroque and garden that was the old Vienna; nor has it anything like the historic highway that runs between the crowded *lands* of Edinburgh from its ancient castle to the shadowy palace of Holyrood, nor the surprise of Stockholm with its water front from which rises its new Town Hall, the most remarkable communal effort in architecture in our time. The character of London is its bulk and multitude, and the quality of London is its accidentalness. It never seems to have set out to be or to look like a capital.

Its relations with royalty have never been intimate. William the Conqueror built the Tower of London on its eastern edge to overawe its citizens, and, unlike all other capital cities, it has never been the regular seat of the sovereign, who has always held his Court in Westminster. In no other capital city in the world has the king to ask permission of the civic ruler before he enters it, nor any where the king's soldiers may not march through its streets with fixed bayonets and drawn swords save with the City fathers' permission. The little ceremony at Temple Bar on every official royal visit, when the Lord Mayor and his Swordbearer with the Pearl Sword and Sheriffs wait at Child's Bank, has an historical significance that marks out London from all other capitals. With the powerful City of London, with its privileges and charters always beside them and usually confronting them over questions of rights and funds and taxes, the sovereigns of England have never felt towards London as sovereigns of other states have felt towards their capitals. The Popes in Rome, Francis the First, Louis XIV, Napoleon and Louis Napoleon in Paris, Frederick the Great and the

Hohenzollerns in Berlin, the Bavarian kings in Munich, the Bourbons in Madrid, the Czars in Moscow and St. Petersburg, all reformed their capitals after their own desire. It is impossible to imagine these cities without them. Once there was a grand possibility for London and a great man ready, but even Charles II failed in one of the few things he cared about, and Wren's plan for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire remained on paper. The Hanoverian Georges had their hearts elsewhere until George the Regent and latterly the Fourth of the name helped London to something really spacious and fine, and the gracious urbane composition of Regent Street set London moving to a statelier measure. (And we of this generation have exchanged it for a mess of architectural pottage!) Queen Victoria, who reigned when England had reached to heights of unparalleled prosperity, had no particular love for London, nor taste for showiness in capitals, and the Prince Consort, who cared for Italian primitives before they were the fashion, and had enlightened ideas of the responsibilities of sovereigns in the advancement of the arts and the industries, died before he had the power to do more than hatch the Crystal Palace. The Tudors and the Stuarts sometimes had the power and the money and the taste to do what was fashionable in their day to give their capital a new fame for beauty. But what they did in that cause was mainly done at Windsor, Richmond, and Hampton Court and Greenwich, and so with the exceptions of the three parks, our peerless Westminster Hall with its angel hammerbeams, the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall, Holbein's Gateway to St. James's Palace, and Chelsea Hospital, London owes little to the taste and generosity of kings.

II

She owes something to the taste and business activity of her noblemen of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, who laid out the residential squares which give inner London so much of its comeliness. Inigo Jones designed the squares of Covent Garden and of Lincoln's Inn Fields, both of which still contain examples of his art. In the same century St. James's Square was laid out; Grosvenor Square, Berkeley Square and the Bloomsbury squares followed in the next century. Some squares have or had a grand town mansion occupying one side, as Lansdowne House does in Berkeley Square or Hertford House in Manchester Square; sometimes a side was left open so that the inhabitants could enjoy a view of distant heights, as the Guilford Street end of Queen's Square was unbuilt to allow the people of the Square to look out to lovely browed Hampstead (but now they have only the prospect of boarding-houses). Belgrave Square and Portman Square are splayed at a corner to give room for a nobleman's house and garden. All have gardens occupying the centre, with statues usually of a harmless sort symbolizing noblemen who drew the first ground-rents. One of the puzzles of London is the delay in throwing down their railings and letting the public enjoy them. The merit of these squares was so clear and so much a matter of pride to the Londoners, starved as they were of the beauties of royal and official architecture and sculptural adornment, that the topographical artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fastened upon them, after St. Paul's and the Abbey, as the admired London feature. Malton's great aquatint series shows

with the right gusto their semi-rural grandeur. It was characteristic of the English, whose mansions, as has been said, are country houses in town as compared with the French country houses, which are town mansions in the country, that they should seek to mix their urbanity with country sweetness. How different a summer morning walk from the Temple to Euston would be but for the misty greenery of the shrubs and trees and lawns one sees passing through Lincoln's Inn Fields and on past the rounded corners of Russell Square with its scent of lilac and the birds tuning up, and under the plane trees of Tavistock Place to the wider leafiness of Euston Square. There are moments when the squares give London the look of a country town. The part about the old Foundling Hospital, with Mecklenburgh Square to the east and Brunswick Square to the west, has a delectable Whiggish charm quite its own.

Inigo Jones took the idea from the Italian piazzas when he designed the first London square (and in a John Bullish way we have attached the word piazza, not to the parallelogram of Covent Garden, but to the arcaded side that still remains), but he produced something quite different in the residential square with a common garden in the centre. The nobles moved to Lincoln's Inn Fields, St. James's Square, Berkeley Square, and Soho Square from their riverside mansions secluded in private grounds, and began to live in a house that was only one of a row of similar houses, each owned by an equal and immediately in contact with public opinion. It must have opened a new life to the early settlers – and especially to their children – in the Stuart squares; and from then on the squares must have had a social significance in the disposition of upper and middle class

London life. The square also maintained a standard of architecture and amenities that gave way too often to muddle and pretentiousness when the aristocratic landowners ceased to lay out and build, or parted with their ground. They had given the work to their own architects, who were men of repute, maintaining a level of taste throughout the design even in its humblest details, whereas the newer developers of suburbs were usually content to do without an architect at all. So Bloomsbury remains to-day with an unpretentious urbane charm of good proportions, and shy hints of elegance in fanlights and balconies. Some evil genius in the Bedford Estate Office did his best to debase Russell Square by inserting odious terra-cotta mouldings round the windows and doors, and other apostates cleared away many delicate Georgian fanlights and left the space naked in woefully many houses. But that phase is past. People of means and taste are coming to prefer the houses of these squares to the 'maisonettes' and flats of the West End, having learnt by now how many of our pre-war 'necessities' were only the children of convention.

So the square did something to provide the symmetry that was so ignored in London, and extended the greenery from the West-end parks to Finsbury Circus, while the little churchyard remnants keep the heart of the City green. The next great feature in the picturesqueness of London did more for the symmetry than the squares.

Stucco! The material that seemed to express all that was sham and genteel and showy of the nineteenth century was to inspire our architects to give London its chief effects of metropolitan dignity, its aspect of a governing mind expressed in considered

and generous design. Nash's Regent Street that is gone was its most sweet and finished expression, but the crescents and quadrants opening on Regent's Park and the serried terraces of Bayswater overlooking Hyde Park, and the 'groves' to the north, have, if not elegance of detail, an urbanity of mien and appropriateness of shape that, however much you may have been taught to dislike them, affect you at times like the beauty of flowers. They seem curiously congenial to the capricious London weather, their long painted surfaces responding to every whim, melting into the mist and glowing out again like the chalk cliffs of Weymouth. Some foreign critics speak of Stuccovia as the outside sign of English hypocrisy and sham, but æsthetically it can be stoutly defended, and surely there is something to be said for the ethics of a building material that, so to speak, keeps us up to the mark like an active and unfailing conscience. Nothing can look so shabby as unpainted and peeling stucco, unrivalled for communicating a sense of discomfiture and evil.

III

After the squares and the stuccoed glories of the Regency came the embankments – Victoria, Albert, and Chelsea – the chief contribution of the Mid-Victorians to the façade of London. The chief of these, Victoria Embankment, was designed in the sixties by Bazalgette, on the shore of the river from Blackfriars to the Houses of Parliament, a distance of over a mile, making a noble promenade from which the citizens could enjoy the beauties and humours of their river. This work was carried out with dignity and a certain

imagination in its colossal ornamental arches and projecting piers, but although bordered at parts by public gardens and adorned by statues, it always looks as though it really was the avenue to Scotland Yard which Norman Shaw made its main western feature. The Embankment marches handsomely, heavily, importantly, significantly ornamented like a London policeman. How often on a return from the Continent does one sigh for something different, something related to the intimate life of the Londoner! Memories arise of the Paris quays with the cafés and shops and resident population, the loungers browsing among the bookstalls, children playing on the wide pavement, and little trades and domestic affairs going on at house-doors and at the kerb. Only at Chelsea round the old square-towered church has the Embankment established any connection with the intimate foreground life of a London district. Only there can you see people sitting at their doors and talking in the summer evening. For the rest, the people on the Embankment are passengers, in motor-cars, in tramway cars, or on foot, and they all hurry along except those who come at night and stare fixedly into the dark glinting water or sleep on the benches so sinisterly ornamented with the sphinx heads on the arms and the crouching camels on the ends. The spectacle of these dispossessed men on the benches in front of Somerset House that is crammed with the wills of possessors has a definite irony.

But the Ironic Spirit must have many moments on the Embankment. I realized a very strange one when after a night on a bench the dawn came and a chill breeze wakened the sleepers, and we looked at one another to discover whose were the voices

that had spoken half through the night. The man next to me regarded me closely and took off my hat, saying: 'Here, mate, that hat won't do for your job. I'll smarten it a bit. A clerk's got to look all right applying for a job.' (I had told him some story in the night.) And this good-natured, feeble cabinet-maker (he had confided that he was a cabinet-maker who had lost his union membership and pawned his tools) worked away at my hat till it looked almost decent. I could not tell him the trouble I had taken, pouring cocoa on it and rubbing it in ashes, to reduce it to that state. I could only wonder and feel ashamed in my masquerading at this grotesque and fine happening in the Embankment dawn. Here was a man hungry, dirty, and worn, with a day's dull misery before him, giving his first thoughts to a stranger and trying to help him!

Strange it was that not till the Thames had long ceased to be the main highway of London were the Londoners able properly to see it. Save for the barges coming up and down with the tide, and a few tugs and police boats, the Thames is an empty river at the part which once was gay with craft of all kind, with royal barges and livery company barges, and family parties with musicians on wherries, and flyboats rowed by jolly young watermen. It is all pictured in Canaletto's amazing drawing of the Thames in the transition moment when old London Bridge with its street of houses existed along with Wren's bright new churches, and in Zoffany's family portrait boating groups going off for a river picnic, each member with a musical instrument. How much music there must have been on the river in those days! And in Pepys's time there would be more. He tells in his Diary a pretty story how, being rowed down to Deptford

one early morning, he began to sing a song from his new song-book, and a stranger following in another wherry took up the song, singing seconds, and in this pleasant manner they made their voyage to Deptford.

In our own day an effort was made to revive the business of the river by the London County Council by a jolly fleet of little steamers, but a stupid Fleet Street 'stunt,' inspired by caprice and municipal politics, deprived the London people of that chance of using their river in the middle of London. Although the Victoria Embankment with its Chelsea extension and the Albert Embankment over the river bound the town together by great processional roads in the airiest places and handsomely proclaimed the belief that London was a sight to enjoy by providing a place to enjoy it, there are moments when one would wish it away for the spectacle of Somerset House rising from the water with boats passing through its great archway. But something had to go to get so grand and useful a work as these embankments with their trees and gardens and great views. Something always has to go, but the result is not always worth it. The half-domestic, leafy Gainsborough charm of the old Mall with its middle walk of lime trees was given up for Sir Aston Webb's new Mall, with its wide boulevard displaying Carlton House Terrace and culminating in Brock's elaborately flabby Victoria Memorial. The London County Council made in Kingsway one big effort to do for this generation something comparable with what was done in Regent Street a hundred years earlier. The scheme was boldly discussed and boldly minuted, until the idea of a controlling architect who would lay down the general design for the street elevation was given up,

and we got the present varied, confused effect of the good and the indifferent rubbing cornices not quite together. The rally at the southern end with Treherne and Norman's two corner buildings surmounted by low octagonal towers and Mr. Harvey Corbett's Bush House saved something from the wreck. It is only in their housing policy that the London County Council have been able to carry through complete architectural schemes, and at Roehampton and Bellingham they have given London something which can be compared, not to its disadvantage, with the notable works of this kind in the early nineteenth century. The Garden Suburb, too, despite some eccentricities and self-consciousness, is the best thing of its kind in Europe. In this list, which seems small, I have not touched on the famous and historic works of architecture which give London its glory, but only on those efforts, few in number, which have been made from time to time in its ordinary building to confer symmetry and the dignity of considered architectural effect expected in a capital city. But the City churches cannot quite be left out even under this view, for by the extraordinary chance of the time they have nearly all the impress of one great mind and are related in groups to a principal church and to the great Cathedral. The Inns of Court, the lawyers' great boon to London, I leave to a separate chapter.

IV

London guide-books, until Queen Victoria's Jubilee set them boasting, are mainly apologetic. There was a tremendous lot to be said for London, but first one had to explain why it didn't look better. That amiably written and scholarly pocket-guide,

The Picture of London (1819), for instance, says honestly enough: 'Nations that prefer the pomp to the enjoyments of social comforts and the convenient performance of social duties must include the buildings of London among its greatest defects.' And again: 'There is a winding irregularity and want of uniform appearance in many of the streets of London by which it is greatly disfigured and all grandeur of aspect lost . . . with a few exceptions strangers may traverse the whole metropolis without the least knowledge that such large buildings have any existence.' Ruskin has said everything that its outside critics had left unsaid, and the average Londoner will add something to that. You may hear a good word said for Battersea Park or for the view from Denmark Hill, or for Wimbledon or Stoke Newington or Ladbroke Grove, or indeed of most districts, but never for London. Still, London pride exists, and was well expressed by the story of the Cockney who in the war joined up in Canada. The recruiting officer, pointing to his form, asked, 'London – London, Ont.?' 'London Ont.!' cried the recruit, deeply resentful, 'London all the bloody world.' Only in moments of real excitement like these would a Londoner give way to boasting of his city. This is true right along the social scale. It is a well-identified English trait, intensified in London, having no relation to traditions of public-school reticence or natural inarticulateness. I would associate it with a characteristic of London itself as though the Cockney dislike of superlatives and the unwrapping of his loves had been imposed by him on the physiognomy of his city. 'Raythera shy place, sir,' replied Morgan, Major Pendennis's valet, when asked what the Temple was like. 'Raythera shy place' is London itself.

The secrecy of the City where a number of famous churches can only be tracked down by the aid of guides and friendlies, where many City Company halls of historic and architectural importance cannot be found at all, where some of the most charming things in modern architecture (such as Belcher and Bate's Chartered Accountants' Hall) cannot be seen when traced because of the dark, cramped court that contains them; that secrecy can no doubt be put down to the persistence of the mediæval plan of the City, almost everywhere, up to our day. But it cannot be urged in the West End, where the examples are even more remarkable.

Let us take, for example, such a famous instance as Victoria Street. The problem was evidently to cut a new processional thoroughfare from Buckingham Palace Road to the Abbey, to connect the new quarter of Pimlico with Westminster Bridge and to link with Parliament Street. Victoria Street was planned and was very slowly built. Victoria Station was built and hidden behind it, and it missed the Abbey altogether! If you study the street on a big map, you will see how adroitly its line was bent in the middle, so that instead of the obvious centring on the Abbey and curving round to the line of the bridge, our architects avoided anything so banal. It was found impossible, I suppose, to divert the street so that we should not see the Abbey at all; but the view was cleverly withheld till the last moment and the proper Round-the-Corner effect obtained. In the case of Bentley's fine Roman Catholic Cathedral the effect was attained at once by placing it at the end of one of the few little streets that actually twist off Victoria Street. Northumberland Avenue was built at great expense so that it might end with a side view

of an ugly railway bridge and a cab-shelter, and no stranger would dream that it might have ended in a prospect of the great river. Nash's Piccadilly Circus, being designed as a pivot feature of a great architectural scheme, had to be altered so that its symmetry would be destroyed and an effect of confusion artfully obtained. Even St. Paul's itself cannot be adequately seen, for it has no *place*, and Ludgate Hill, although rebuilt several times, does not centre on the West Front. The British Museum has a courtyard but no approach. (Nevertheless, it can be seen from the boarding-houses opposite.) The Records Office is in a narrow side street. London's Bourse can only be discovered with guides. Yes, even the executive centre of the Government of the British Empire, the most famous house in the whole political world, is in a little cul-de-sac, and so mean a structure that it deserves to be there. How often the Spirit of History as she winged to No. 10, Downing Street, must have thought what an odd place to call at on such high business – how her accompanying Ironic Spirits must have relished it all as they hovered down to the old spot again!

'Ye go along a street an' ye come to a lane, and ye go along the lane an' ye come to a passage, and ye go along the passage an' ye come to a plank, and ye go over the plank an' ye come to a public-house. An' that's London,' was how an Irish friend put all his London impressions in perspective. Whenever you set out to walk in a straight line, you soon find the street becomes a lane, and so on. If you try to go straight from Westminster to the Tower, you will find yourself at the Elephant and Castle Tavern. (The London bus's journeys still mostly end in public-houses, as you can see from the tickets.) The Thames

itself, with the long 'S' it describes between the Tower and Chelsea, is in the conspiracy of London mystifications, and by its devices St. Paul's seems as movable as Easter, appearing where you never expect it and not appearing where you do expect it. Glancing from Whitehall down Horse Guards Avenue, you discern it somewhere in Southwark; in South London it seems to move about the sky like the moon. You gaze in vain from Westminster Bridge for St. Paul's until you sight it somewhere about Waterloo Station.

Then, this reticence of London in populace and architecture, is related to a primal elusive factor which affects both: its weather. The winds do not blow differently in London, nor can the sunshine and moonlight be different; but nevertheless, London has an atmosphere of its own. Westminster is built partly on a swamp, and the Victoria Tower of the House of Lords, for instance, should have been many feet higher but the foundations on the old river-bed would not stand it. Evening mists rise through the stones and tar, and in the autumn the golden haze, veil upon veil, comes between London and its business. The coal-fires and the river-mist still produce the famous London fog in all its varieties, from the white volatile clouds to 'London particular.' In a great many days of the year it is impossible to see the City church spires from Waterloo Bridge. In the spring the colour of London is like the flower and grey-green leaf of lavender, and often a blue grape-bloom appears on the silhouetted stone buildings. There are days with a sparkle amid faint purple haze like the depths of an amethyst. London has more than its share of fitful days when the Portland stone towers and spires of the City seen from Waterloo Bridge

whiten and vanish, brighten and vanish, like lights turned off and on by the Lord Mayor himself. Sometimes the sun-gleam sweeps over the City with a majestic movement, transfiguring the noble façade of Somerset House, bringing sacred fire to the cross of St. Paul's. And in an instant all is grey again.

There is no denying London's beauty, but it is a beauty that seems to come in spite of herself and of the efforts of so many of her sons. Often it makes you think of natural scenery rather than the handiwork of men: its profuse rank undergrowth of low, mean houses spreading in all directions; its tall groves of flats and office palaces; its heights of St. Paul's and the Abbey and Westminster Cathedral, all seem to be grown where they are by natural processes or upheavals.

And how often do the London nights with their moist softness and delicate shadows seem to have beauties bred only there. The London lover likes to remember that it was in London that Whistler discovered the nocturne. In the wide reaches of the river at night he found the silence and space in the midst of the complicated resounding town that his exasperated nature sought, and into these nocturnes he has imparted a strange tension of beauty as though at any moment something might snap, and the chartered Thames and its warehouses and lights along the banks might suddenly not be there, only a wide, nameless creek, with forests at its swampy sides, swooning under the night.

PORTLAND STONE

I

IT WAS THROUGH PORTLAND STONE THAT WREN EXPRESSED his genius, and, as an artist responsive to the nature of his material, something of his greatness came from that beautiful and enduring stone that is so little considered yet is almost London itself in the memories of her visitors and in the unconscious thoughts of Londoners. How strange it is that in the articles and books on Wren hardly a word appears about Portland stone! You will look through scores of indexes without finding the name. There is no book on it even in the R.I.B.A. Library.[1] No poet has sung of Portland stone, although great ones have sung of sofas and mice and marine engines. Yet it is a great and magical stone, more beautiful, I think, even than the Roman travertine, with its marmoreal quality that responds so exquisitely to wear. Portland stone seemed ordained to form the face of London, its surface so finely mirroring the fitful lights that break through her river-mists, blanching in her towers and spires to a finer whiteness as the darker grow the coats of grime at the bases and sides. How those towers and spires come and go through the mists as you watch from Waterloo Bridge over the grey-blue Thames on a spring morning! Who can ever forget his first vision of it all as he beheld, round the bend of the river, the apparition of the mighty fleet of Wren, with their top-gallants and mainsails of stone?

The nautical simile leaps to the mind at the sight of Wren's white spires and towers, and it is appropriate, too, to the material

[1] Since this was written, Messrs. J. V. Elsden and J. A. Howe's admirable little book, *The Stones of London*, which gives a concise chapter on Portland Stone, has been published.

in which Wren worked. Portland stone is a marine deposit of the Jurassic period before Britain first at Heaven's command arose from out the azure main. Its beds are full of fossils of marine creatures, cockles, sea-urchins, starfish, and oysters. You can see shell imprints on the freshly cut whitbed stone on the top of the new Bush Building, and you can see 'horses' heads' – as certain shell fossils are called by masons – on the weather-beaten south parapet of St. Paul's. You can see and feel the shells projecting from the plinth of King Charles's statue at Charing Cross. It is a strange thought that the majesty of the capital of this sea-joined empire should come itself from beneath the sea, and that all the stone glories of London should be stamped so secretly with the seals of the creatures of the sea. How could our poets, how could Mr. Kipling, have missed such a theme?

The relations between Portland stone and the characteristic London light have been mentioned. The smoke and the wayward directions of the wind buffeted in the confined irregular streets of London are other factors in the complexion of the town. The weathering of stone is affected by hundreds of chances – the arrangements and accidents of the drips, the quality of the jointing and bedding when tested by the rains, the flatness of the surface, and the eccentricities of small mouldings, as well as the prevailing rain-bearing wind that whitens projections and cleans every surface on which it has free play. 'Portland stone,' an architect once said to me, 'is the only stone that washes itself.' His theory was, that once your building is up, the stone begins to gather a crust of dirt which greys down its first delicate lemon tinge; after it has accumulated a certain quantity the crust comes off by its own weight, and the air then plays on the

clean stone, which has thus already had a certain weathering, and the surface gradually whitens to the ashen colour that is the beauty of London. But this is a matter for expert agreement. The chemists and mineralogists are still in controversy over the real process and causes of the weathering. Unlike most stones, it decays by powdering off in a uniform way, so that its surface continues flat. You can see in the Strand just now the process going on in four buildings of different periods. The new Bush Building has the lemon tinge – still with the *nature* in it, as masons say – Australia House, beside it, has greyed down, and the Law Courts, which is about fifty years old, has a tinge of green in its white, while Wren's St. Clement Danes has an ashier white and rich delicate blacks. The bases of nearly all London buildings where the wind has not free play soon turn black, and spires and towers soon become white, but strange pranks are played on the body of the building. Every one must notice how the general tendency in London buildings is to whiten towards the south-west, growing darker on the far sides, with the chief darkness at the east and north-east. St. Paul's colonnade and cornice, and especially the upper drum, are the most conspicuous examples of this. But it can be seen in most of our great buildings: in the portico of the National Gallery, or in Somerset House with its silvery river front and its dark back to the Strand, and particularly in the public buildings in Whitehall and in the British Museum.

An intimate little illustration of the process of stone weathering can be studied at the pump that stands against the corner of Bonomi's classical building in Serjeants' Inn off Fleet Street. Here you can see plainly how the splattering of the rain on the

metal top of the pump has whitened the stone wall in a radius round it, and the drip from the projecting stone course has cut white marks in the stone above it. Another example is the balls on the piers of the garden entrance at the end of the western lane at Chelsea Hospital, where the rain, having free play, has washed the round surface clean. The gateway is a piece of Portland stone, delightful to examine.

Pretty it is, as Mr. Pepys would say, to study the doings of the rain-bearing south-west wind all over the town, how it puts its own high lights on London, touching the Portland stone with silver and spotting the plane tree-trunks with gold. In spring, especially when the light is fitful and the plane trees are shedding their bark, a sudden brightness will discover at times a secret London rhythm in these spotted buildings and trees, and even the flocks of pigeons suddenly wheeling round, like the spirit of Portland stone detaching itself from the buildings, play their part in the symphony. It is a vision one often has in the spring from the Temple windows.

But it is in autumn when Portland stone discloses its rarest beauties, when London is again the capital in a river-swamp and the mist oozes up out of the marshes of Westminster – the swamp-mist that destroys all frescoes in St. Stephen's unless they are under glass, and tarnishes the Templar's silver spoons three times a day – and the river and city fade away. Then the watcher at that unglazed window on Hungerford Bridge sees gently emerging the lovely façade of Somerset House with its triple screen, as its smooth, fine stone catches the coming light like a mirror, while Cleopatra's Needle and the granite Waterloo Bridge are still invisible; and as the light threads through the

WATERLOO BRIDGE

mist you are aware of gracious phantoms in the distance: St. Bride's and the City steeples and towers, and high over them the peristyle and lantern of St. Paul's. The relationship of the granite bridge and the limestone Somerset House is always changing. There are certain foggy days when the stone disappears, but the dark granite still looms out.

The façade of St. Martin's, Ludgate Hill, with its black-pointed shapes at the base, is one of the many strange transformations that Wren never foresaw. So many and so incalculable are the effects created by the weathering of the stone that the fanciful might discern a Gothic *genius loci* of London fighting against the spirit of the classic that modernity has imposed upon it. A city of mist and fogs, capital of a nation that gets along comfortably with a labyrinthine law based on precedent, and a monarchy that may not rule – what has it to do with the lucidity of orders and the hard clarity of sunny lands?

My favourite pieces of Portland stone are the plinth of the Charles I statue at Charing Cross, which tradition says was designed by Wren, the lovely vases and coping on the wall of the doomed Devonshire House, the flat buttress at the foot of the clock tower of the Law Courts, and Pennethorne's cherubs and dolphins on Somerset House west front. But these are personal preferences. Many Londoners have their favourite stones; and one is often struck by the sensitiveness among Londoners about this material. Discussing stone with a hard-working, shy man of business, I spoke about the blackness of Portland stone. 'Oh, don't call it black,' he said quickly, 'don't call it that, or you and I shall quarrel. It's not black. It's the most delicate dark grey and purple, and all sorts of colours.

Dark – if you like.' It was like Charles Lamb's shrinking from so hard a word as 'fat' about the young roast pig.

Phrases like 'leprous,' 'piebald,' and 'skeleton' have been used against the London Portland stone. Certainly the milk-white quality of its lit shapes against the night sky at first have an uncanny effect on the mind. The look of London is so different from that of other cities. Manchester buildings are uniform rich black, with a delicate surface, as of adhering textile fluff, so that on some days it seems a velvet city, with black velvet buildings and white velvet clocks. Glasgow buildings darken quickly into a hard, morose quality, with smoke quietly about them. Edinburgh is a grey city, its Craigleith stone and method of cutting reflecting little light, but deepening its tall dignity. Liverpool has Portland stone, but its atmosphere does not whiten or darken it, as London's does. So when a young man comes to settle in London it seems a strange, uncanny place, and Wren's great cathedral and churches, and the long front of Chambers's Somerset House, and the many great buildings, excite him much and perplex him a little. It is usually after many years that he comes to understand why London looks so dramatic, or – shall one say? – 'theatrical.' He is aware of something against which his reason is fighting. It is the weathering of Portland stone; the appearance of great shadows where there can be no shadows, throwing blackness up and down, and wreathing towers with girdles of black, and cutting strange shapes on flat surfaces. Mystery hovers over the city, everything is slightly falsified, almost sinister; 'fair is foul and foul is fair'; there is magic about. Strangeness is allied to beauty, and that is romance. That is the final secret of Portland stone.

I have said that no poet has written about Portland stone, but that is not quite true. Henley's 'madrigal in stone' for St. Bride's showed thought for the material. He must have had the right sense of it. But it was John Davidson who alone understood it, for he wrote:

'Oh, sweetheart, see! how shadowy,
Of some occult magician's rearing,
Or swung in space of heaven's grace
Dissolving, dimly reappearing,
Afloat upon ethereal tides
St. Paul's above the city rides.'

II

The character of the chief building is as determining a factor to the aspect of a city as the species of trees is to a landscape, and London without Portland stone is now not conceivable. The subject, I think, has been so little considered by London topographers that with the gentle reader's permission some notes may be included about my perambulation of the quarry-island of Portland from which the material comes.

Even before Inigo Jones's time this stone was used intermittently in London. There are records of its use for repairs and additions at the Palace of Westminster at the end of the fourteenth century, and a quantity was also used at the Tower; but for 150 years after that it seems to have been forgotten till Inigo Jones perceived its properties and built the Banqueting Hall and several other London buildings of which only the noble fragment of the Watergate of York House remains. The accepted story is that Jones as Surveyor-General visited the Isle

of Purbeck and Portland, and, discovering the value of Portland stone, at once decided to use it for the new buildings he was designing for the king. Against that I would advance the theory that it was to Nicholas Stone, statuary and mason, that we owe the introduction of Portland stone as the chief building material of London. Stone, so far as the records go, has always been a static name in Portland, where the names are almost tribal. It is one of the signatures in the agreement with Wren for the provision of stone for St. Paul's, and the name is common on the Portland gravestones and in the villages to-day. Nicholas Stone was born at Woodbury, near Exeter, son of a quarryman and stonemason. It is not known whether his father was born a Portlander, but the name, as I say, is one of the most common in the island, and Portland stone had been used for building and repair work at Exeter Cathedral since the fourteenth century. Nicholas Stone married a daughter of Hendrik de Keyser, the Dutch sculptor, from whom (according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*) he acquired a share in quarries in the Isle of Portland in which de Keyser had large interests. All research into the history of Portland shows the unlikeliness of mainlanders, let alone foreigners, having any holding in Portland quarries, so it seems more likely that Stone, with Portland relatives, got his father-in-law to invest some of his money in Portland quarries, but in any case his connection with the Portland quarries is established. Stone worked for Inigo Jones in such beautiful existing examples as the Banqueting Hall and York Gate and Greenwich Hospital, as well as many buildings that have disappeared, and it was Jones who established Portland stone as the monumental building stone of London. All the

probabilities are that it was Nicholas Stone who interested the great architect in this stone, and that he had financial as well as masonic reasons for doing so. Wren followed Jones, and as Palladian architecture settled down on London, Portland stone available in large blocks was eagerly welcomed by the architects until the late eighteenth century with its more domestic ideas, for a little, favoured Bath stone.

Wren followed Jones in his material as in some other things. His memorial to the Bishop of Rochester about the decay in Westminster Abbey stone outlines his researches on the subject at the time when he was designing the western towers in Portland stone:

> I find after the Conquest, all our artist masons were fetched from Normandy; they loved to work in their own Caenstone, which is more beautiful than durable. This was found expensive to bring hither, so they thought Rygate stone in Surrey the nearest like their own, being a stone that would saw and work like wood, but not durable, as is manifest; and they used this for the renewal of the whole Fabrick, which is now disfigured in the highest Degree. This stone takes in water, which, being frozen, scales off, whereas good stone gathers a crust and defends itself, as many of our English Freestones do.

Elsewhere he writes:

> The best is Portland or Rock Abbey stones, but these are not without their faults.

He decided for Portland stone and so settled the complexion of London as he did the form of her features.

Wren built his cathedral and fifty city churches, his part of Greenwich, the towers of Westminster Abbey, the Monument, the stone parts of Chelsea Hospital and several City companies' halls and Marlborough House, and many other works, with the limestone of Portland. Gibbs, Hawksmoor, and Kent followed him, and Chambers and Robert Adam could find nothing better, and so Portland stone, like the plane tree, became the essence of London. When Rygate and Chilmark decayed it was used for Henry VII chapel, and when the Caen stone of the Carlton Club failed in the London acids Sir Reginald Blomfield gave it a new mantle of Portland stone. Mr. Ralph Knott's London County Hall, Mr. Harvey Corbett's Bush House, and Sir Edwyn Cooper's Port of London Authority building, are all of this stone. It is completely established as the monumental material of London. Its only challenger now is the soulless ferro-concrete.

In the island of Portland, at the headquarters of the quarry company, is a garden of fossils which contains among other wonders enormous stone ammonites (*Ammonites giganteus*) as big as a ship's lifebuoy. Millions of years ago the creature was evolved which has left so plainly in this noble limestone the curves and articulations of its massive form, and beside it is the matrix slab in which it lay. And as one studies in this petrified garden the structure and detail of this strange structure, so decorative and architectural, one's thoughts turn at once to other intricate and symmetrical structures in the same material; to St. Paul's and St. Bride's and Somerset House, that the late and conscious inhabitant of Albion had left as the monuments of their minds. The matrix is the same.

THE END OF THE CIRCUS

PORTLAND STONE

Hardy speaks of Portland as the ancient home of the Slingers, a peninsula once an island, and still called such, that stretches out like the head of a bird into the English Channel. In a letter printed in the *Journal of the Society of Dorsetshire Men in London*, he writes of the feelings that must be aroused in the minds of Dorset men as they look up at the great mass of Dorsetshire stone that is St. Paul's.

Portland is singular in all respects, and if man had had the making of it as a quarry, it is hard to see how he could have improved on Nature's arrangement. The Chesil Beach, a long, thin neck of pebbles cast up by the sea, unparalleled in Europe, provides railway access to the mainland, and the peninsula, being mainly of a uniform 400-foot height, allows a gravitation railway to be used for bringing down the stone, the weight of loaded trucks in descent pulling up the empty ones. The whole place is scored with fissures running north and south, with other breaks running east and west, so that open quarrying can go on with advantages unknown elsewhere. The stone is of an accommodating and tractable character which does not require to be blasted or cut, but, once the whitbed is reached, hit by a tap on the wedges and 'feathers,' splits down to the shelly base, usually from 4 to 6 feet thick. This bed is usually in three tiers separated by softer shelly divisions. The ordinary section of a good quarry shows: Rubble, 24 feet; cap, 11 feet; roach, 4 feet; whitbed, 15 feet (in three tiers). The cap has often to be blasted, but explosives are not used on the whitbed. The roach is a harder, rougher, heavily pocked stone, mixed with shells, used chiefly for breakwaters and quays; but it is within the possibilities that its turn may yet come with our architects for general

use in the bases of buildings, its natural rustication offering attractions, as can be seen in the Cunard Line offices in Liverpool.

There is only one inlet in the peninsula where boats can now land, a pretty spot called Church Hope Cove, the scene of the moonlight interlude in Hardy's *The Persuit of the Well Beloved*, and on the path between this place and the prison, round which Borstal boys now play football, you look down on a mile of undercliff which seems at one time to have been the edge of the plateau that had fallen forward. These banks are called 'The Weirs.' Disused quarries, great boulders, stone debris and blocks of stone ready for shipment lie around, with green roads running through the confusion. The stone has an old grey look, not like the silver Portland stone in London, although it has been exposed to the wind and rain for 250 years. A few stones bear Wren's private mark, that some interpret as a 'y' and some as a wineglass. It was from these 'weirs' that the stone of St. Paul's and the City churches was quarried. One quarry is still called 'St. Paul's.'

Wren's contractors cut the stone from these quarries, much as it is done to-day. No cranes were then in use, and the stone was worked down by trolleys, jacks, and crowbars to the little pier that can still be seen. There it was shipped into sailing ketches, much the same as those you see at Castletown on the other side of the island, that carry the undressed stone to-day to the Vauxhall wharves. The ketches take any time from five days to six weeks to bring the stone to London.

One would think that by this time the little island would have been rifled of its treasure and rebuilt of discarded stone: but it

is not so; the main part of limestone has not yet been touched. The area, for instance, of the east cliff above the 'weirs' from which St. Paul's was built is only now about to be cut. The yield of stone is enormous, rising to 30,000 tons an acre.

Walking over this part with a mentor whose decisions and activities mainly rule its quarrying affairs, I spoke of the strangeness of the great cathedral and the London churches having lain there in their brute formations until the magician Wren summoned and fashioned them into the wonders that rise over London. My friend, tramping down the grass, said: 'There's a whole new London down there. Perhaps a better London than Wren's. It all lies with the architects. The stone's here.' He stamped on the ground as though signalling to something below. Yes; it all lies with the architects – and the patrons. Looking at the fresh stone cubes and the open sides of the quarries beside the sea, one gets a strange physical sense of the relations of geology and architecture, of the procession of creatures through 'unreckonable geologic years' that had gone to make coral and limestone just of that particular structure and quality, and of the creatures of this age that have fashioned it after their imaginings into the stuff of architecture.

'Do you know the Royal Automobile Club in London?' asked my mentor, as we gazed down on a large quarry-space active with cranes and men. 'We took it out of that corner at the back.' He pointed out where this and that building used to lie before it was cut and transported. It was the same with statuary. An unusually large block lay ready for the trolley. 'Oh, after they've cut away what they don't want they'll find the statue of Kitchener inside.' It was about 8 feet by 6 feet deep and weighed

about 12 tons, not so big as the block from which was carved the copy of the Farnese Hercules that stands in the hall of the Geological Museum. That must have been over 12 feet long, and probably was the biggest perfect block ever cut. It was presented to the Museum in 1851 by Stewards, the quarry-masters. In the masons' shed at Portland I saw the lions for a war memorial being squared, each in three blocks, and the caps of the great fluted columns for a London business palace, and many other things that will be gazed at for a long time to come. Entering the high street of what Hardy calls 'The Village of the Wells,' opposite the ruined stone cottage with mullioned windows that people point out as the home of Avice Caro, I noticed a small excavation, and asked my host what was being built. He replied that that was a quarry, a little quarry. They had cut the Cenotaph out of it!

The people of this singular island are a community still curiously primitive in many of their ways, and self-contained almost beyond belief in these days, particularly when one remembers the world-famous character of their commodity and their old-standing relations with London. Even to-day the right to work in the quarries is restricted to natives of the island. The stone-masons who work in the sheds dressing the stones are mostly 'kimberlins' (foreigners from the mainland), but every quarry-man (with an exception to be mentioned) is of island stock who has inherited the right. The right goes with the land cut into strips called 'paddocks' or 'lawns'; but, although one 'lawn' may have any number of owners, it is rarely bought or sold. If a daughter of a native marries an alien and has for her dowry a 'paddock' of land, she can, by virtue of it, invest her husband

with the freedom of quarrying. Each 'lawn' is devisable into as many parts or shares as the owner pleases, and each part has equal right to the quarries with the others. Conveyance is made in a simple patriarchal way.

The Portlanders hold tenaciously to their ancient rights, and have withstood all efforts of the 'kimberlins' to work in Portland quarries. At the beginning of the century, when there was an enormous development in the use of the stone in Government buildings, and 2,000,000 cubic feet of stone was supplied for these contracts, Cornish quarrymen were by agreement allowed to work in Portland, but, except for a few who married Portland women, and so received the freedom of the quarries, none was allowed to remain. One is struck at once, on a visit to the island, by the strongly developed physical characteristics and signs of race in the men, and by a pervading family resemblance. 'Island custom' that tinges the plot of *The Well Beloved* was that of people pairing together before wedlock and marrying only when the woman was with child. If no child was coming, the couple parted without stigma. The custom was probably bound up with the holding of property and rights and the importance of progeny to inherit them. Despite the apparent freedom of this custom, illegitimate births were very rare. The custom seems to have died out by the middle of last century. Although there must have been much close breeding, weaklings are rare, and a great many of the quarrymen continue at their arduous work until after threescore and ten years. They are said to be very independent, intelligent, proud of their skill and position, and, although tolerant, not too flexible in their dealings with 'kimberlins.'

A strange island, a strange people, and a strange destiny to its merchandise. Out of it came the wonders that are London, and within it lie the wonders of the London that is to be.

A LONDON CALENDAR

I

SPRING

EVEN THE MOST HARDENED LONDONER HAS MISGIVINGS WHEN Spring comes round, and, like all town-dwellers at this season, he is stirred yearly by the idea of his lost inheritance in Nature. The children feel it keenest, and all over London you meet little bands, generally with a decrepit baby-carriage to carry the youngest and the commissariat, setting out for a park, sometimes with wild ideas of getting to Epping Forest or Hadley Wood. These ambitious ideas are usually found in groups of very small boys, and often end in football in the Green Park, with sleeping tramps as goal-posts. City workers swarm in Farringdon Street market, where the barrows are charged with pot-flowers and packets of seeds with pictures even more brilliant spread for the eyes of the possessors of little gardens in the suburbs, and they take heart again. The motor-bicycles and push-bicycles are overhauled and off go the young City folk in groups or couples, and in the evening the Portsmouth Road – if it were not for the petrol – would be fragrant with the may-blossom or the bluebells they are bearing home. Thoughts of the *Royal Sovereign*, that noble steamer that makes her landfall at the Old Swan Pier after taking citizens to Margate, thoughts of the budding green over the backwater of Wargrave and the near joys of daffodils at Kew and the chestnuts at Bushey, are with all Londoners, and the week-ender acquires a temporary popularity. But, even in inner London Nature is showing a jewelled finger in the parks everywhere, and on the window-boxes in Mayfair. But it is not of this that the London Perambulator would write, but of the Town Spring, of the signs and portents by which he

who knew nothing of Nature would still be able to identify the season and to rejoice –

'Rejoice, O London hearts, rejoice;
Rejoice, true lovers dear!'

Let us see how it would seem to a fog-hardened, club-pickled Tim Linkinwater of our day. This is his story.

Tim (*loq.*). Certainly your *Primavera* is beautiful, artistic and that sort of thing. Crocuses and daffodils are pretty to see – I always think nothing looks better on a luncheon-table – but to people living the town life as we do, why should we gush about budding trees and green fields, and so on? There's nothing in it. We live among bricks and mortar and lamp-posts. Your Country Spring has nothing to do with them – makes no change here. Everybody knows the time of year without looking at your trees and birds. We have our own good signs. I'll tell you something of the Spirit of Town Spring. (Have a liqueur?)

I see my Town Spring, *Primavera Urbana*, something like this. She is a lavender person – with eyes like amethysts if you like – in a desperate hurry. She has a smart lead-grey hat with high lights, like the dome of St. Paul's, and one sleeve dark blue and the other sleeve light blue, and she wears at moments horn-rimmed spectacles. She moves along on one roller-skate. Above her fly cherubs of two kinds, *putti* and *amorini*, as I think they are called by those who study Spring in Italian pictures. The *putti* carry ladders and pots and paper-bags and newly painted green chairs, and one of them has in his purse a pinch of 'scentless and delicate dust'; the *amorini* adore her hat. Swiftly, propelled by a movement of the left foot, she fleets along the

Embankment, the smoke from the railway bridge dividing to let her pass, and the policemen holding up their arms as Spring rides through the street. The cab-stand under the railway bridge marks her well. The cabmen call to one another, and, leaving their cabs, run towards her with ready feet. As they advance the *putti* shower down pink papers. The cabmen grasp them and retire, triumphant or abashed. For, to them, Spring is the Lincoln Handicap and the City and Suburban.

On runs the jocund procession, with never a look behind. They are in the Embankment Gardens. Some of the silly *putti* touch the grass with their bright feet, and little yellow and white paper-bags and banana-peel appear, as though children had been picnicking. Spring pauses under the statue of Sir Bartle Frere. It is mottled and dingy. She touches it with her beautiful finger, and a shiny black streak appears on the face and drips down the coat. Again! The beautiful black colour covers his head and shoulders. Again! The other side of his coat, his trousers, his boots. Then, the hand of Spring dons an old glove – rub, rub – there is the inscription bright and plain! Then on again to the other statues, and they too shine out in sweet glimmering black.

In another flash she is in Piccadilly, but as she passes she twitches the long blue coats from the backs of the policemen, and they stand revealed all in tunic and trousers, tall and fine, like irises that have burst their sheaths. But now are we in Mayfair.

Quickly, quickly, she and her white company spread, and soon the merry riot of pot and brush and ladder bursts upon many a tall building. See the glowing beds of yellow ochre, of Indian red, of cream and pink, suddenly aflame in the pallid faces of the

buildings; watch how the chocolate hedge spreads along over pilaster and entablature; observe the thin lines of red and green peeping up the architraves of the doors. Mark well the fine frills of white and lilac on the little pigeon-breasted houses of Park Lane. Now the ambient air is fragrant with the sharp, sweet smell of turps and varnish. Every citizen sniffs it as he passes, and knows well that Spring has come. 'Tweak, tweak!' comes the happy noise of the pulleys as the painting-cradles are hoisted up. There's music for you!

Spring hurries on. In Oxford Street she touches the shoulders of the clerks and the shopmen as she passes. They look down. (Confound!) The clothes they thought so decent, and even smart, now look spotty and shabby. They sigh and go to the tailors.

Now is she in Bond Street. She scatters little white scrolls which float like apple-blossom adown the wind till they touch and adhere to their appointed place on the side-doors of the notable milliners' shops. They bear legends on them in scrawly handwriting, such as 'Good Improvers Wanted' and 'Good Skirt Hands Wanted.'

But where is Spring? She has gone – and, search as you may, you can never come up on her now. But signs of her passing may be traced, just as Farmer Hodge can trace the footsteps of your Country Spring by the flowers that have sprung up where she has trodden. In the Temple a long serpentine thing crawls across King's Bench Walk and spouts water on the road. Spring has been here. And look! You can see six o'clock on St. Martin's clock!

Hark, how all the town is alive with sweet voices! The chars-

à-bancs with deep 'honk-honk' begin to swarm at the Abbey, and the bottles are out at the lake in St. James's Park and shout it good sticklebacking; hope revives in the breast of the Confidence Trick Man as he cleans with india-rubber his Bank of Engraving notes; the sand-blast workers on the face of the hotels call down for beer to be prepared when the appointed time arrives; the new tweed caps have swarmed at Anderton's Hotel and at the Northern stations, for the Cup-tie is all over and gone. The tariffs in the hotels are beginning again to raise their heads, and there is a feathering of nests in Bloomsbury. White and canary-coloured waistcoats reflect the sun in Throgmorton Street, and even walk-clerks clank their chains and rejoice.

The voice of the vacuum-cleaner is heard in the land, carpets are dangling from the window, and married men are dining in restaurants. Hurrah! Hurrah! Spring is here. Sing 'Sweep-weep. Summer is coming in!'

That's what Spring is in London. ('What about another liqueur?')

II

SUMMER

The Beadle of the Bank of England is authorized to discard his caped overcoat of crimson and black and appear in full glory of puce and scarlet and gold when the temperature of 70° Fahrenheit is registered. Visitors to the Bank on warm days must have noticed how anxiously that functionary – the Best Dressed Man in London – consults the big Bank thermometer hung on the interior wall at the entrance, when the temperature

begins to approach that figure. So it has become the custom with old City men who want to be sure that Summer has arrived in London to pop in for a glance at the Beadle, and if he is coatless their calceolarias and geraniums will need watering. For the variegated Beadle would make anyone think of flowers; indeed, he is probably dressed as he is, and the Bank messengers in their puce swallow-tailed coats and scarlet waistcoats are so coloured, because some high official of the Bank who originally decided these costumes wanted to be reminded of some favourite flowers, just as one First Lord of the Admiralty named the new destroyers after his favourite foxhounds and another after his favourite liqueurs.

The Beadle of the Bank of England, then, registers when Summer is at par, and the City men go on holiday with a contented mind. It will probably rain or chill, but they have done their best.

London is not a Southern European capital. All the big Oxford Street drapery shops face the south and take the sun without anxiety. Neither is it a Northern European capital, for the great shops in Brompton Row and Kensington High Street face the north without misgivings. The sun here is neither an enemy to be dreaded nor an ally to be courted. The more exclusive shops certainly are in streets running north and south – Bond Street, Dover Street, Savile Row, Sloane Street, Baker Street; but there the shop-window wares are not the important consideration. The one pervading sign that tells the stranger that he is now well south and nearing the Continent is the prevalence of sun-blinds fitted on the windows in the West End; but *persiennes* are very uncommon, and the great mass of London

THE HORSE GUARDS

houses have no defences against the sun. The *persiennes* or *jalousies* are seen mostly in the late Georgian houses round the parks or in Chelsea, along with open balconies with little umbrella-like canopies and porches, suggesting, like Thomas Shotter Boys's tinted lithographs of the early Victorian period, an era of cleaner, gayer sunshine than ours. There is a little modest row of white houses with such balconies and *jalousies* standing back from the highway at Holland Park that is a very refreshing sight on a hot day, like a fragment of Weymouth or Lyme Regis that has come to town.

Of course, the sun glares down sometimes, and even the City, for all the narrowness of its streets and alleys, is like a grill. The people in the poor quarters come out of their stifling cubicles to sleep in the street, and on occasion the police recognize the practice and stop certain by-streets to traffic in the night. There was a spell of heat in 1911, when crowds went to bathe in the Serpentine by moonlight in the teeth of rules and regulations, providing London with one of its most romantic spectacles. But summers that produce these eccentricities are rare. No Bencher of the Middle Temple has ever been seen to take a header into the Temple fountain, although small boys cannot be kept out of the fountain in Trafalgar Square. London on the whole is a temperate capital, full of citizens who have never shed a waistcoat in town in all their lives.

III

AUTUMN

The fogs of the London autumn do not come as it were full-grown, heavy-bodied fogs, but arrive rather like the young of

the species, delicate and playful and in a way charming like a young pig. One day when the yellow plane-tree leaves are falling on tall hats and wigs in the Inns of Court and on the Embankment and round the City churchyards, you are aware of a delicate mist entering the town, faint and volatile, coming and going in the currents of air. It seems to have no connection with such gross food as coal-fire smoke, but as a distillation from the ground under London. The shapes and textures of the buildings soften, but the Portland stone still glimmers a little as the sunshine gilds the mist, and with the fluttering leaves the scene glows and sparkles like a topaz. It is one of London's memorable moments.

The adult fog is a different story, but I must confess, although it is to write oneself down as old-fashioned, I have never lost my taste for a London fog. Stung they ever so sharply your eyes and lungs, their chemistry precipitated your sense of London anew and linked you with the phantasmagoria of the Victorian romancers and M. Taine's and Nathaniel Hawthorne's journals and old volumes of *Punch* and Gustave Doré's London drawings. There is a rough, fantastic, Gargantuan goblin London lying waiting for these fogs, taking corporal existence only when the hour comes; a London's Particular makes visible a certain world whatever it may obscure. The motor-bus and the taxi-cab make it only the more apparent.

I remember one demonstration of this, although it is difficult to convey exactly how it did affect one. The fog had possessed London for two days. On the second day bus traffic stopped at six o'clock, although an occasional bold bus ran the blockade of the fog. The night before there were long hold-ups and you

came on buses stranded by the kerb along the chief thoroughfares. A strange procession appeared after midnight. Out of the fog there came with noise and bleary lights an empty bus, and one after another with slow thunder came seven other empty buses in a melancholy line. They had been lying by the wayside until the first courageous bus came along, and the others then summoned up power and fell in behind. A little later came six 'No. 9' buses one after another, all empty, lumbering eastward. It does not sound very queer when written, but the apparition of these empty, misty buses coming out of the obscurity and staggering blearily on and being swallowed up in the fog was extraordinarily disturbing.

The voices in the air of unseen busmen and carmen and draymen take on a rounder heartiness excelling their own best efforts when they are visible men, and the policemen loom up in the fog with added grandeur. They require it all, for there is a spirit of misrule abroad; newsboys play tricks and cry strange news, and strait-laced citizens find themselves in public-houses, strange companionships are formed, judges and prisoners on bail lose their way and are reported missing at the courts, people go to the wrong theatres, accidents occur and the ambulance gets lost. Cats come out into busy streets and sit on the pavement as if it was night. Anachronisms like torches and links appear. Only twenty years ago a man going home about midnight in a fog saw a glare of torches and a body of men passed with King Edward walking in the middle. The torches were carried by footmen and policemen; then came the king, heavily wrapped up, with two of his gentlemen; then more policemen; then some stragglers of the night, attracted by curiosity or by the

chance of a safe guide to Buckingham Palace. The procession came so silently out of the fog and vanished into it again that the spectator later in the night was not sure that he had not imagined it. But it was King Edward, who had been dining with a Court lady in Portman Square, and, finding it impossible to go by carriage in the fog, had decided to summon torches and a guard and walk just as a Stuart king would have done.

A humbler street pilot who made good use of a torch was the old news-seller who sold evening papers in the Strand near Somerset House. During one bad fog just before the war many people were anxious to cross, but some traffic was still moving despite the density, and they hesitated, ventured, and returned. The old news-seller with Cockney readiness twisted up two of his papers, set them on fire, and marched over waving the torch while the others followed. If he had been a young man and one of his followers an alert millionaire, he would no doubt have been a big figure to-day, but he was an old man, and none of his followers was any sort of millionaire.

Then there are the raree-shows of the fog that every observant Londoner knows. People light up their rooms, but they do not pull down the blinds, so the fog street effect is always curiously different from a night effect. It is a little uncanny as you drift along the stately old parts of the town, such as Lincoln's Inn Fields and Bloomsbury, and see before your eyes hundreds of lit interiors with figures like stage scenes framed in the darkness. You can study ceilings and panelling and mantelpieces in the old houses that it had often been your wish to see. London is so rich in historic rooms like that one with the tall narrow windows and carved door-heads in the office that was once a Lord Chancellor's

LONDON, N.W.

in which the Bank of England Charter was signed. Another great room I remember had no lights, but a fire was burning in the grate, throwing moving shadows on the ceiling and outlining an extraordinary projecting mass with branching shapes, which one slowly identified as an enormous moose's head with vast antlers.

IV

WINTER

It may be reasonably objected that this London Calendar is haphazard, lacking proper order and balance, fog belonging to Winter rather than Autumn, and snow nowadays pertaining to Spring, while rain, which plays a very large part in London weather, is not mentioned. Well, I admit it, I admit it, as the Edinburgh man replied when some one said that it was a nice day. But there is this defence, that in attempting to give a recognizable picture of London's seasons one must be a little unsatisfactory and capricious. Thinking over my London winters, I remember rain and again rain, but I can remember rain at all seasons. Snow, I think, is better worth the recording. It also excitingly affects the spectacle of London, although it is a rare happening. Still, I remember one Christmas night when the snow came handsomely. For just a few people it made a marvellous London. It did not begin until about midnight, and as it was Christmas night, hardly a soul was about at that time. The few drifting, silent black figures walked crouchingly close to the houses; the cabs had gone home; the omnibuses had ceased running. So I saw all the Strand pure white from end to end, with only a track or two across the new snow, like the

tracks of rabbits outside a wood on a snowy day. The long vista in the lamplight was as if one were looking through gauze, but just round each lamp the flakes fluttered suddenly bright, like birds flying into the glare of a lighthouse. Walking with bent head, I saw that under each lamp-post the flakes were dancing with their own shadows, which flickered up and down as if the snowflakes had found a new game which they could not play in the country roads, where they fly in darkness. For the first time in my life I made a visible mark upon London. All the way along the pavement, when I looked back, I could see my track, and it was almost alarming to watch oneself so palpably traced down into the side-streets and up with a curve to one's own doorstep. It was a shock to one's sense of London as a place that destroys all traces, and even a slight discomfort to have left signs of one's abode; it felt horribly public.

One other vision of this virgin London has been permitted to me. It was during the latter part of the war, when acting in a Fire Watch on St. Paul's during the air-raids. One winter morning about two, after snow had been falling for four hours, I went up the little spiral stair to the Golden Gallery. The circumstances of the climb in the darkness with the point of an electric torch dancing on the screw-stairs and on the great bulks of old timber in the vast brick cone, no doubt wrought up the mind to a pitch of unusual sensitiveness, but the intensity of the vision as I fumblingly opened the door and stepped out on the balcony of the Golden Gallery seemed not of the ordinary world. The City of London lay open white and silent to the steady moonlight. No lights showed, for it was war-time and all fires were out at that hour, and the snow lay fresh and unbroken

on the cold roofs. Immediately below, the nave and a transept of the cathedral were outlined by their gutters and the shadows in the great wells; the river seemed near and very dark till one noticed the blackness of bridges. The church towers and spires somehow were not very plain, except the beautiful fountain-like shape of St. Mary-le-Bow. Their Portland-stone whiteness, for once, was lost against a whiter London. The houses that moon-lit morning did not seem asleep so much as dead – dead and shrouded and shriven in the light of a last moon. We lived in Apocalyptic times then, with ghostly visitants raining death from above and the earth suddenly giving voice with a thousand reverberations and fearful bonfires sometimes in the sky. But that vision of London, peaceful and silent and white, could only have been under conditions of war.

THE FOUR INNS

I

OF ALL THE SIGHTS OF LONDON, THERE IS NONE SO SURPRISING, so grateful, so quickening to the imagination, as the Inns of Court, that lie so discreetly round the western end of the City just outside the line of its walls. The ill-conditioned may hint that the lawyers encamped there to take toll of the rich citizens going west, but others see them like a sort of Swiss guard defending the West End against the City. There they stand, four ancient Inns of Court – Middle Temple, Inner Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn, their red and grey alleys and courts and spacious green gardens making an arc in three links from the river to Gray's Inn Road. With the crossing of a few streets you have an almost continuous thoroughfare through the Inns from Middle Temple Gateway on the Embankment to Theobald's Road on the north, the passages over Fleet Street, up Bell Yard to Lincoln's Inn Gate in Portugal Street, across Chancery Lane and Holborn to Gray's Inn Passage, adding the savour of contrast. All four Inns have been there for 500 years and more.

Think of London without them ! A hive of close-set streets would have covered the area of each of these precincts; the dull congested districts to the north of the City boundary tell us what would have happened on the west. And not only do the Inns give light and space and comeliness within their precincts, but they affect happily their vicinity. But for its business with Gray's Inn, Bedford Row, that nobly spacious William and Mary *place*, would never have survived, once its old residents had gone, without solicitors; nor could Ely Place have lived to ring curfew into the twentieth century. Essex Street, with its

watergate of old Essex House through which summer waves her first green flag at the Strand, backs on the Temple. Without Lincoln's Inn the great square of Lincoln's Inn Fields that Inigo Jones planned so seignorially would have lost all its state and sunk to the level of Red Lion Square, instead of being a place where in real life, as in novels, lucky unsettled people call on solicitors and hear of 'something to their advantage.'

And round the Inns of Court, too, cluster curious and individual shops: tobacco-shops with traditions and snuff-jars, tea-shops with scoops of Queen Anne's date, gunsmiths, makers of legal robes (and of peers' and peeresses' too), law stationers who sell parchments and vellum, heraldic stationers who can still produce on occasion a hatchment, clockmakers of famous bracket-clocks; and taverns, one of which has the grandest cast-iron stove in the world, of the romantic-classical order, stamped with the arms of Gray's Inn, to whose hall it once belonged, and whose clerks in winter warm their noggins on its wide, flat top, and another with a richly carved Jacobean ceiling (part of it original) which in Victorian times looked down most days on three or four judges at lunch. There are, alas, very few old bookshops now near the Inns, although there were many twenty years ago; and the last of the old fishing-tackle shops – how thrilling were its giant stuffed tarpon and the ticket,

'TARPON FROM THE GULF OF FLORIDA.
RODS, ETC., SUPPLIED'

– has deserted Fleet Street for the West.

But all this keeps one from the Inns themselves, as indeed they have delayed many an ardent-minded, grateful-hearted perambu-

lator. Temple, Lincoln's, and Gray's, there they be, permanent as the law itself, and, like the law, their origins are lost under the dust of antiquity. Despite all the prodigious researches of the learned Inderwick and Williamson, the early history of all these societies is conjectural. It is not known how the Temple lawyers came to be divided into two houses, and what their history was before they left Holborn for the old quarters of the disbanded Knights Templars, whose hostel had passed to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, and what is the meaning of their symbol of the Flying Horse. There is evidence of some sort of hostel for students in the manor-house of the fourth Baron Grey de Wilton in 1370, and Lincoln's Inn has official records back to 1422, at which date it was evidently an active organization. Matter enough for centuries of dispute between the Inns as to which has precedence, priority, or superior antiquity over the others, but by agreement they are held to be equal in the sight of God and man and law students. 'The four Inns of Court' stand upon a footing of equality. *Nihil prius aut præterius, nihil majus aut minus.* They form together one university. Their powers of jurisdiction and privileges are co-equal.

Studious lawyers have had their bowers in these historic precincts since the fifteenth century. They have kept their trust jealously, and, on the whole, wisely, although, like the Church, there have been times when they sinned grievously against the light, and pulled down what was worthy and put up what was not worthy. In our day they have brought their Inns to something like the gracious seemliness of a cathedral close. The spirit of Shakespeare hovers about them. Tradition says that he played in *Twelfth Night* in the Middle Temple Hall, and the

Comedy of Errors was played in his lifetime in Gray's Inn Hall; his patron, the Earl of Southampton, was a member of Lincoln's Inn, and on the wall beside the ancient gateway his friend, Ben Jonson, is said to have worked as a bricklayer.

'Gray's Inn for Walks,
Lincoln's Inn for a Wall,
Inner Temple for a Garden
And the Middle for a Hall,'

an old doggerel sings. They resemble and differ like Oxford colleges.

Francis Bacon laid out the garden and walks of Gray's, and the decrepit old catalpa tree on crutches in the garden is believed by Gray's Inn men to have been grown from the slip Raleigh brought home from the Indies and gave to Bacon. Bacon's statue stands in the court, his portrait is in the hall, and there is a part named Verulam Buildings. On Grand Night in July it is the custom that each man there should drink 'to the pious, glorious, and immortal memory of good Queen Bess.' Thomas More is the great man of Lincoln's Inn, the home of the Chancery Bar. It has a Gothic chapel by Inigo Jones, and in Taylor's Stone Buildings the noblest terrace of any inn (and on its quadrangle is the sharpest memorial of London in the War in the cut and pitted façades made by two Zeppelin bombs that burst there). Its most ancient court is Old Buildings, with its branching stairs behind stairs and queer little cock gables, one set of chambers having three rooms, each on the top of the other, and a stone floor in the topmost; a vine that bears grapes and two fine fig-trees in New Square, and a great rural prospect

KING'S BENCH WALK, TEMPLE

over lawns and flowers, with the background of the grand old plane trees of Lincoln's Inn Fields.

But the Temple – in æsthetic consideration the two houses are one – is, of course, the noblest, with its Norman church and Tudor hall that has the best open-timbered roof in England, apart from Westminster Hall; its Wren gateway and his brick doorways in King's Bench Walk; the surprise of the Master's house, like a small country manor-house set behind Fleet Street, and somehow suggesting a meet with the hounds in Tanfield Court; and, to enlarge and freshen it all, the shining Thames at the bottom of the gardens. No wonder literary men came to the Temple and the Victorian dramatists set scenes there in *roués'* chambers for guilty philandering. Chaucer, Fielding, Goldsmith, Johnson, Thackeray, Dickens, and, of course, Charles Lamb, who was born there, have won the Temple a mortmain on eternity.

But the literary men in the Inns of Court are only decorations in the history of those great functioning institutions whose influence has penetrated throughout the national life for five or six hundred years. They are a legal university whose degree is a right to plead in English courts, and, unlike other ancient universities, they formed in the past a community into which the student usually entered for his active life. Consequently the records and traditions of the Inns contain all the illustrious names and events in English law.

II

Charles Lamb, whose birthplace has at last been identified in Crown Office Row, has written of the Temple, as all men know,

and to write anew of its ways and graces is hard even in 1924, for things alter least of all in the Temple, though new fortunes are made and old legal family names die out of the letterings on the doorways. Motor-cars now park – how Lamb would have scrutinized that word! – in the broad slope of King's Bench Walk and under Goldsmith's windows in Brick Court. Women barristers practise without remark, and the newspapers now sometimes forget to put 'Portia' in the headlines dealing with their cases. Dark faces from the east and south are almost as common as white ones in the lecture-rooms. We had in the war-time a taste of Elia's days when the Temple nights were very dark, so dark that the Benchers had broad white rings painted round the trunks of the trees in King's Bench Walk to protect the trees from hard-headed Templars (you can still faintly discern white paint on the bole of the tree to the right of Mitre Court gateway). The Inner Temple gardens look greener than ever, but much of it is fresh turf brought from Greenwich – another memorial of the War. The gardens had been worn almost bare by the feet of the Inns of Court soldiers training for the War, and the grass would not grow again. Many Templars who trained there never came back to this *Jardin des pas perdus*. Thanks to a Coleridge, the Temple fountain has been returned again to the old flat, round shape that young Elia knew; rooks have twice come back to the trees in Fountain Court and twice been harried away; the old pear tree in the Master's garden had to be cut down and a branch of it was flourished by Caliban at an Old Vic performance of *The Tempest*. It was believed to have been there in Shakespeare's time. The river no longer washes the garden-foot of the Temple but is confined by the

Embankment, and electric tramway cars roll and clang between the Temple and the Thames. Some old buildings have gone and new ones have taken their place, and the Benchers and Sir Reginald Blomfield have seen to it that the newest at Brick Court is not unfriendly to the kindly old buildings it flanks.

But anyone who has had the wonderful good fortune to live in the Temple for twenty years or so, when he lets his mind dwell on the past, can perceive many changes even there. There must have been a phase in Temple life succeeding the Pendennis days when the Temple grew even more Bohemian, Alsatian almost, and odd indecorous things happened. Some of this phase is luridly – possibly over-luridly – reflected in one of Mr. George Moore's books, but from old Templars the new residents used to hear a good deal, and much of it was all summed up in the anecdote of a much-respected Master of the Temple disturbed by rumours, who had a rule made that all ladies entering the Inns after the doors were shut must write in a book at the lodge their name and that of the person they were visiting. Next day it was found that the lady visitors had given names, clearly, romantically unreal, and each had put down the name of the Master as the person she was visiting. The book was withdrawn. But that was long ago. Nothing can now be more in keeping with these grave shades of the law than the decorum of life there. It has its Bohemian side, but that consists rather in the lonely, self-absorbed life of some of the old residents and the ups and downs of legal fortune, and the relationship of the Temple and Fleet Street, which is as old as printers' ink.

The sinister side of Temple life, into which Dickens had so uncanny an insight, seems to belong to a far-off time, but no

imaginative stranger who spends his first few nights there can escape some hint of it. The wicket in the great door is opened by the porter, and the sound of it slamming behind you cuts off all the noise and humanity of the streets. The silence of the empty courts with the many names on the entries suggests the busy day life that has receded and left its secrets to the buildings and their shadows. The 'air of consultation' seems still to hang about the flagged courts and red, well-trodden walks, and you imagine whispers that are only the rustling of the trees. And the Temple trees have their own queer rustlings, like the noise of dead 'silks.' In enclosed places like Hare Court and Pump Court there are strange currents and draughts that set the plane-leaves to nudge one another when no stir of air can be felt. Footsteps echo in the distance, and a black figure moves slowly through the light and into the shadow of a doorway. You hear his tread on the old wooden stairs, an oak slams, and a light shows at a window – probably the only light in the whole court. Black cats, of whom there are unholy regiments, slink round corners in narrow passages that seem specially made for their furtive ways. Who knows what may come round that crazy corner at Lamb's Buildings? Who knows what has come round it? On the thin strip of green churchyard beside the ancient church you can see a few mediæval gravestones lying long and narrow to remind you of the earlier Templars. When one is weary and tired with things, this ancient place, with its load of secrets, its inscrutable face, and the loneliness and mystery of the hidden life around, can be very sinister. One can believe that a time comes to many of its denizens when they see it with a sinking of the heart. The story told at the inquest one day of the

lonely, friendless man in his Pump Court chambers who was found by his laundress dead with a revolver in his hand might have had anywhere for its setting, but somehow it seemed more significant in a Temple court.

Dickens has one grisly tale of the Temple in his discourse on the utter loneliness of life in chambers, and a very queer one of Lyon's Inn. But it is of Gray's Inn that we read in the *Uncommercial Traveller* his wild tale of the man who, after many years of living in it, had found London unsatisfactory, and had one day given his watch to the man who lived in the chambers above him, asking him to keep it for him while he went away for a bit. The tenant above knew little of the man below, but took the watch, and thenceforward day after day watched its owner's letter-box in his oak bulge with letters and circulars. Finally he grew suspicious, and communicated with the porter of the Inn. Together they forced the door, and saw the body of the man who had found London too small for him hanging there.

In all the Inns of Court are chambers that seem to be the setting for the uncanny. Lincoln's Inn has some particularly inviting to such thoughts, with strange recesses of sets of chambers within sets, and small unlikely staircases and inner bridges. The Temple has some strange chambers with cherubs' heads on arches that catch the light furtively, and attics that must have been built from debris of the Great Fire and rooms that look into rooms, but the oddest I know is in one set where long ago the panelling was covered with canvas and papered over. The mouldings of the panelling were planed down to give smoothness, but on stormy nights the wind gets behind the wallpaper

and the rooms seem to move on every side. In the same part the light at the entry throws up through the windows the shadows of the tree on the ceiling and walls, and when your lamps are out you sit in a shadow forest with the black leaves moving and twining above and around you. It is exquisite to watch the shadow leaves playing over a white Madonna panel on the wall. Most of the King's Bench Walk windows still retain small panes of crown-glass, tinctured with delicate colouring which the sunshine brings out, and at sunset the curving panes, catching the light from slightly different angles, twinkle and wink jocosely all along the Walk, as though remembering all they had seen and known since Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, waited in her great coach for her lawyer there till it was dark, and her lackeys lit their torches.

I can remember summer nights when these many-paned windows among the dark trees were full of the dancing devilry of moonlight, as though all the moonbeams over the City had gathered in this silent, secluded place for their revels. Why ever did crown-glass with its quality and gentle camber from its spinning disappear from our houses for the dullness of rolled plate-glass? How happily the sunshine rests on the old red-brick faces of the buildings with their subtleties of recessings and string-courses, and the sure reticent mouldings in the soberly charming entrances in which Wren surely must have taken some pride; and how it splashes on the stone flags of the upper platform, and on the separate pathway of small stone setts that run the whole length of the Walk to the line of the gardens, looking as though it had been there before there was any pavement at all. I always think of it as the original Walk of the King's Bench.

III

In all these ancient fastnesses of the law men of marked character and curious ways appear and live congenial lives. The table-talk and record of the Bench and Bar are spiced by their sayings and doings. Sometimes they are pleaders without a plea, sometimes judges who make the Bar gasp. One such original, most dignified and picturesque of them all, died during the War. W—— carried his eighty years very lightly on his broad shoulders. He seemed to have made up his mind about the period of his life that he would make a permanency, for he remained a man of the seventies in costume, characteristics, and rank individualism until the end – a remarkable figure even in the Temple, where individualism is tended and relished. His black, half-Muller hat, his Inverness cape and leggings, his healthy, well-coloured face, with grizzled side-whiskers, and clear eye, made up a personality that it was particularly pleasant to meet in the leafy avenue of King's Bench Walk.

Literary pilgrims from America used to rub their eyes when they saw him, so far did he exceed their dreams of what they might find in the Temple in the twentieth century. He was like a figure straight from a Millais illustration in a Trollope book. But he was no lay figure. He had been a famous rowing Blue, and won the Diamond Sculls. A hard rider, he also thought about riding, and had a share in making the steeplechase rules. He wrote a couple of novels and a book of reminiscences, and he claimed that he inspired Pasteur in his hydrophobia discovery. He wrote *A Modern Layman's Faith*, and, adventuring into history, he investigated the parentage of James I.

As a lawyer he was chiefly famous for the cases produced by

his own actions. He had many cases against railway companies, the most quoted being his Christmas Eve case when his train was delayed owing to a fog and he missed a connection. The company refusing a special train, he travelled in a goods train and sued the company for lost time, getting £1 damages in the County Court but losing on the appeal. He objected even to have his railway ticket clipped, holding that it was his own property until the end of the journey. He was a terror to bus conductors, refusing to pay his fare until he reached his destination, for who knew but that the bus might break down on the way? No wonder he quitted an England that grows more sheep-like every day.

Another old worthy of the Temple, not a lawyer but a gateman, also calls for portraiture. He lately retired from those dusty purlieus. He was a tall man with grizzled hair and whiskers, and wore his tall hat as policemen do in old-fashioned pictures. No one could refuse entrance to the Temple to strangers on Sundays with more dignified authority, or relax at moments when he decided there was sufficient occasion to relax. If a newsboy taking a short cut through the Temple from Tudor Street were to raise his voice and try to sell his papers, the astonishment which preluded his tremendous rebuke was a thing to be remembered. It was said that he knew of a statute, still unrevoked, by which news-sellers and criers of last speeches on the scaffold could be taken into the Roundhouse and have their ears slit. He could tell you (and did tell you) the secret of the Temple altar before it was repaired, and he was full of old Temple lore. He knew how many pigeons were found dead in the Temple Gardens on St. Valentine's Day – and why. His

wife had been a Temple laundress for forty years, he told me, and her grandfather had been a gateman in the Middle Temple before that, so that this old man's connection with the Temple must have gone back to the times when Johnson and Goldsmith were there. He was a freeman of London, and his father a freeman before him. He carried the two faded old certificates with their griffin symbol in a little wooden cylinder, stained and dark and much handled. He had lived most of his life in Neville's Court, one of the least altered of the old labyrinths, north of Fleet Street. For about half a century he had worked in one capacity or other under the signs of the Lamb and the Flying Horse.

He had seen much of many famous lawyers in his time, but it was all rather blurred. Only one shining figure seemed to remain among the dusty phantoms of his memory. 'What did you do in your youth?' I asked him. He drew himself up with more than usual rigidity. 'I was office-boy to Charles Dickens, the great writer,' he said. He had served at the office of *All the Year Round*, at the corner of Wellington Street, in the sixties. He used to carry Dickens's bag for him to Charing Cross station, which had just then been opened, when Dickens went down to Gadshill. 'What was Dickens like?' 'Well, you wouldn't fancy much the way he was dressed, sir. He had a black velvet coat with big smoked pearl buttons, and trousers of shepherd's plaid, the biggest check you ever saw.' 'Did Dickens ever wish you a merry Christmas?' I asked him. 'No,' he replied, after thinking, 'you see my master didn't take much notice of me, sir. He got a lot of notice. I remember one fine day, at the corner of Villiers Street, a man coming up to me (me with the bag) and says, "Is that a showman?" and I says, like that, "That's the

great Charles Dickens." People used to look at him everywhere he went.' That was about all Dickens's office-boy, now the retired Temple gateman, could remember. Still, he had 'seen Dickens plain.' How strange it seemed!

The last years of his life in the Temple had, of course, made the deepest impression. I remember his rich Church of England voice shouting up 'All Clear!' after a bad night's bombing and barraging. I think it annoyed him especially, with his strict ideas about the Temple, that when all the gates were locked anything should come in even from the sky. He was personally annoyed about the aerial torpedo which split in two and smashed right through the north side of Pump Court, half of it coming out in Hare Court, exposing its ugly ochre filling. Had it exploded, the Temple Church would have been ruins. The old porter, who somehow always managed to have a piece of any Temple object of interest at the moment in his pocket, did not have a bit of that bomb. He had, however, various shrapnel items. 'Strange things to be happening, sir, in the Temple.' He knew a good deal about the Temple cats, and could sometimes give you news that 'your cat passed up the Walk about half-past eleven, sir,' and so on. He had been failing lately and was rather depressed, like many people, when the tension of the War relaxed. Even in the Temple change enters and faces are missing, but though he has ended his official work, I think he will haunt the Temple lanes for some time before he takes his stiff salute and his grizzled whiskers and his innocent, officious manner and his freeman's ticket of the City of London to some gate job in the shades.

To live in the Temple is to come to terms with the shades as

they steal so softly over the compact of your life. Clocks within and without strike the hours – Big Ben's voice is borne at night on favouring winds, St. Paul's is always plain – but it is the many sundials on the Temple walls that strike on the heart.

'Shadows we are and
Like shadows depart,'

whispers the ancient sundial near Blackstone's chambers in Brick Court, and on sunny afternoons in the long vacations, when the Temple is quiet but for the laundresses gossiping in the courts, the sundials make their presence felt; you feel Time gathering his forces. There is a walk in the Temple when the flagstones become gravestones engraved with the names of old lawyers; busy men flit by you with the same kind of wig and gown as men wore in Queen Anne's day to plead with instances far older than their costume, using phrases such as 'only as recently as 1750,' and the like. The horn that is still blown before the hall at six each evening to summon the Templars to dinner is used because a bell would not have been heard across the Thames by young Templars out coursing hares.

In the Temple you are as close as an echo to the past. How often as one climbed the wooden staircase late at night did the old tenants of another age seem so close that their forms and faces might appear any moment round the old balusters! But this sense of continuity bred in the aged place acts both ways, for the future haunts as well as the past. One strains at times for a glimpse of those who will climb these stairs a hundred two hundred years after we have all vanished like the hours marked by the Temple sundials.

LONDONERS

I

THE PEOPLE OF THIS IMPERIAL CITY ARE KINDLY ENOUGH NOT to break the windows of an enemy ambassador on the outbreak of war and to allow fat and sleek pigeons to crawl at their feet in their busiest places. They have never been tried by siege except briefly from the air, nor by famine except through poverty. With no memories of suffering and humiliation at the hands of an invader, with civil wars fought far from their borders, and the ships at their wharves uniting them in trade with all the world, the lot of Londoners through the centuries has been blest beyond that of the citizens of other ancient capitals. If they are not more humane, more tolerant, more liberty-loving and slower to wrath than others, the fault is theirs. A case that they are so – and the Londoners like to believe that they are so – can be outlined. How many cities and peoples of the world have benefited in their calamities and distress by the Lord Mayor's Fund? And what other capitals produce such a fund of succour for the world's distress? London's charities have almost kept pace with her wealth, and her vast system of hospitals maintained by voluntary subscription, if a failing in a communal sense, is a credit to her private munificence. No cause is too lost not to find funds and sympathy in London. The Jacobites are allowed to hang their wreaths and inscriptions on King Charles's monument on an appointed day; communists and anarchists may preach their doctrine in Hyde Park. When the Lord Mayor of Cork died in prison by his refusal of food and the body was brought through London with a long Irish procession at a time of bitter guerrilla war, the streets were cleared for the procession, and the Londoners stood respectfully, and most of them

uncovered as it passed. After the Great War, London was the first capital of the Allies where our ex-enemies could be met again in social life. It is a commonplace that partisans of conflicting political beliefs meet together in friendliness as they do in no other centre of politics. In London, too, those publicists of other nations who have gone furthest in abuse and innuendo against England run most chance of becoming social lions. Perhaps the explanation is that this cynical, humoursome old city will not take anything very seriously, even those who write in such big headlines that he who runs may read. Whatever it may be, it makes for the largeness and unconsciousness that one expects in a world's capital.

But how to write of the Londoner? Is there a typical Londoner? 'I don't believe there's no sich person,' as that great Londoner, Betsey Prig, said of that typical Londoner, Mrs. Harris. It is admitted nowadays that there is no typical Scot, no typical Welshman – how, then, can there be a typical inhabitant of a city that contains more people than both these countries, that contains more Scots by birth or parentage than Edinburgh and more Irishmen than Dublin, more Welshmen than Cardiff? All nations of the world are, or have been, represented in this capital of the world. Even the Thibetan has at last come to it.

Yet in the past there have been men that were recognizably Londoners. Only in such a centre of men of education and leisure, of unsatiable appetite, constantly fed by sayings and doings beyond the common interest, with the belief that there would be nothing better, could Samuel Johnson have adequately lived his life. Only in such a city would people have put up

BLOOMSBURY

with him. Carlyle had to come to London, although he mixed little with its people and affairs, but lay deep in Chelsea like a great fish which must come to a particular bank for some ocean chemistry necessary for fertilization. Carlyle, Coleridge, Rossetti and Swinburne were London characters rather than Londoners, for the sign of a Londoner is that he is one who desires to be part of the race-tide of human existence in its fullest. Browning alone of the major poets was such a one till he settled in Italy.

Dickens, Mr. Beresford Chancellor has advanced a theory, was not a real Londoner, for he said things about London that no London lover would say. There are no things too hard for a London lover to say at times of this monstrous mistress of his. Slattern, wanton, feather-headed, heavy-footed, lunatic as she so often is, Dickens must have loved her to have given so much of his life to her and to have exalted her with all his art. If Hokusai did not love the mountain Fuji Yama which he drew every day, if Shakespeare did not love England, if Balzac did not love Paris, then Dickens was not a lover of London.

And Thackeray! He was a captious Londoner. With him it often seemed as if London were his disease, and he could not help telling all the symptoms (that is another sign of a true Londoner). How clear-drawn, how workable, how familiar is his London; how easily one recognizes it as one goes about in any mood, while as a rule it is only in clairvoyant moments that we know we stand in the immortal London of Dickens. Thackeray with all his genius makes London seem a small place; Dickens makes it as big as the skies or the human heart.

London brought Henry James from New York, Barrie from

Scotland, Shaw from Dublin, Wells from Sussex, and Bennett from Burslem; and each have enriched her with fine gifts that in turn increased the lure of London to the youths of succeeding generations. All of them could be counted true Londoners who participated in the race-tide of London life. Of statesmen one would say that Gladstone and Chamberlain were not Londoners in the sense that London was not a necessity of their existence, great though the part they played in it, while Palmerston and Disraeli are inconceivable without London.

II

In the search for the true Londoner – in an exact use of the term – one would have to discard many accepted types, the counterpart of which would be found in any great city. The bachelor of leisure who once populated Mayfair, and particularly The Albany, is almost extinct, and the survivors live a good deal abroad. There is little leisure in Mayfair now, not because most of its young men profess to have some business, but because motor-cars and their consequences, and the flood of new-comers ferocious for gaiety, expressed by movement and the new freedom of women, have ended leisure. No saunterings now in the Locker-Lampson manner along Piccadilly and real good yawning club-life. No long afternoons at Christie's discussing their friends' pictures and the disaster that has led to their sale. Only the retention of family portraits leads to gossip and innuendoes now. The younger sons of the biggest families cannot make ends meet, except the lucky ones who can join them with the purse-strings of an heiress, and those who retire on pension from the Army or Navy or Indian Service can hardly

live on it even if bachelors. The West End is full of beachcombers in these days, although it looks the same as ever. If the gentlemen of the Dilettanti Club came down from their frame in Reynolds's picture they would find little left of the old Mayfair men about town and the old Mayfair leisure that they knew, although they would have found both in plenty in King Edward's reign. In Victorian times the young Englishman of means differed from the young man of means in other countries in his passion for sport, athletics, and travel; but to-day, when all nations have adopted the English games and everybody travels, he is less distinctive, and the milor, like our cavalry regiments only exists on sufferance.

Of course, in the vast social microcosm of the West End (which in George V's reign has its arc from Hampstead to Wimbledon) there are still Major Pendennises and Sir Mulberry Hawkes and Mr. Waggs and a thousand survivals of the Victorian Londoner, but even to themselves they are not the true variety. They have dwindled, lost plumage, lost crest, lost spurs, lost heckle. The brilliance of the capital was expressed in their glossy high hats, their punctilio of clothes to every detail. Now they go about in their most Eleusinian streets in broad daylight with soft collars and travelling hats and anyhow coats as though they were all in the motor-car trade. Reflective foreigners visiting London after an interval get the impression of a society that is homeless and on the move. The young Pendennis of our day may possibly be as authentic a London type as his ancestors; night-clubs and country-clubs and the tremendous improvisation of the London life of richer classes must throw out some perfect specimens, but the universal restaurant entertaining and the

averaging of town costume have destroyed him as the London spectacle that in the nineties bade the rash gazer wipe his eye. The motor-car, indeed, has destroyed very quickly – more quickly than steam destroyed Georgian elegance – a whole elegant aspect of the Victorian capital. The London of the young man coming up from the country twenty odd years ago is a good period to look back upon. A pioneer motor-bus or two ('mustard-pots') had added a new stench to the streets, and the horse-bus people looked on them as comical freaks of the moment, as the Thames shipmasters looked on Denny's *Rob Roy* when it puffed its way up the Thames less than a century before. The hansom, swaying delicately in unison with the horse, the whip poised like a lance in its holder, and, to protect the enamel on the top of the cab, the cotton summer cover in colours or white with tassels, made in most cases by the cabby's wife, as the wives of the gondolieri still make covers for the cabin-tops of gondolas, seem now as far away as the clean, gay, leisurely London streets in Thomas Shotter Boys's lithographs. At night the waiting hansoms from the Gaiety Theatre door, serpentined along the Strand, with their lamps tinkling in the summer twilight, was a happy sight. There were still state coaches of grandees to be seen, and one night at a Coronation reception at the India Office the coaches, after discharging their jewelled freight, were drawn up side to side at right angles to the streets from Craig's Court to Montagu House. The horses were taken out and the coaches left with only one tall footman with powdered hair and rich livery sitting on the great box with its embroidered hammercloth. It was their last rally, for at King George's Coronation there were hardly half a dozen

private coaches, and now there are only the royal ones and the Lord Mayor's. In the Park it was still the fashion to drive in Victorias, the footmen wearing evening dress, and the sight of ladies sunning themselves in these open, airy vehicles had a Venetian charm, a spectacle at once intimate and leisurely, contrasting curiously with the closed-in appearance and harassed look of restrained speed that the grandest motor-car gives. The youths of to-day can have no more idea what the Park was like in those days than their elders can have of Mayfair with sedan-chairs and linkboys.

If the London *fastuosus Londiniensis* is now a rarity, there are still, however, a few West London varieties more difficult to identify, but as indigenous and characteristic. The upper Civil Servant that Mr. Bennett has drawn so discerningly in Mr. Prohack is one: usually a public-school and university man, member of an esteemed club, often of old family, close to the great worlds of fashion and finance, but not of them, concerned in affairs and taking decisions that matter to millions, acquainted with secrets of highest financial and political value, but living quietly his office, club, and home life in a sort of priestly service and obscurity.

Another West London type of a very different sort that can be produced only in a capital is more difficult to discern. One is always reading how this or that royal princess excels in statuary or water-colours or marquetry work, or is organizing some astonishing miniature city, or has become a Ruritanian dog-fancier; or that a royal prince, in order to excel in some manly or artistic accomplishment, is taking lessons from some unnamed expert. All this activity means the forming of

connections between the Court and numbers of usually humble inconspicuous people, leading often to curious ramifications and surprising encounters. A little modeller of deceased royal dogs, for instance, living in the depths of Camden Town, has had many royal visitors, and at least one who stopped to tea. (What a theme for Henry James – with the arrival of country relatives thrown in!) I have heard of one such specialist who, after a great visitor had gone, told a friend: 'I chatted His Royal Highness into a bronze.' These connections, if long maintained, are humanly recognized on the Court side, and the offspring of such teachers and specialists keep them alive in an almost Oriental way.

This variety of Londoner is perhaps too inconsiderable to deserve mention, but it touches something very characteristic of West London. Every one who has mixed much with Londoners of all classes must have been struck by the frequency of reference to royalty, not only in the middle class, but among the poorer people. The abundance of processions, the writings and photographs in the popular Press, of course, have much to do with it; but again and again one seems to detect in the latest street legend or in remarks in the crowd at a procession that there is some latent understanding and sympathy with the old traditions of a mediæval capital. The story, for instance, that went everywhere in the streets in 1924 about the girl who swallowed the octipus egg, and the octipus had growed inside so she was dying and 'ad to be smothered, and they were waiting now for permission of the King in Buckingham Palace, was only one of the many sporadic Cockney stories with a royal reference that has gone round the town. The stories of Queen Alexandra, who

has so gracious a hold over so many London hearts, are translated into the terms of life of the teller, sometimes very strangely. The death of King Edward turned the thoughts of so many London women only to Queen Alexandra, and one Battersea charwoman told with tears how 'it took six of them, they say, to get her out of the room, screamin' and strugglin' awful.' There was a vision as old as Troy in that sympathetic woman's mind. That habit of translating life into their own terms is characteristic of the Cockney. I remember about dawn on the Coronation morning of King Edward a discussion at a coffee-stall in front of the Abbey about the King, and an old woman there said: 'He's led a gay life, he has; there ain't a slum in Whitechapel he ain't bin in!' Her second sentence only meant that that was her idea of life set free from decorum. At royal weddings the comment of the crowd has often a breadth of licence that Herrick or Pepys would have recognized and liked, but it is often curiously informed about the personal relations of the grandees like the talk of mediæval citizens. The gusto of it, too, is astonishing. These modern Romans must have their shows adequately provided for them, for their expert admiration or mockery – more often for a combination of both.

A unit in a London crowd may not give an idea of the multitude any better than a drop of water does of the ocean, but for analytical purposes it has its value. Those students of London life who were hanging on the railings outside Richmond Terrace near the Cenotaph in Whitehall on Princess Mary's wedding day had an unusual opportunity for such study. Typical of many thousands of London women of poor but not poverty-stricken circumstances who had come many miles to see the

wedding procession and intended that they should enjoy themselves, holding that the pageant was all part of their lawful rights as Londoners, was a mother with two children and three female friends from East Ham. She wore (she explained in conversation) four skirts and two petticoats, and her children had each an additional layer of clothes. It had not rained, the February sun was bright and almost warm, and life for the moment was in flower. It soon became clear from what she said and what her friends said about her that she was a social leader in her district, and she deserved to be, having wit, audacity, and an intense sense of human contact.

Of course, she had also the traditional old London lore. 'When the soldier goes so – *sharp* – it means that royalty is comin', and when you see a hunting party in a red coat and top-'at by himself it means the same thing. Why a'nt the police put down the sand?' She wore a faded velvet long coat with big buttons, but some fastenings tied by tape, and a rabbit-skin muff. Her test of worth was whether people could smile or not. 'Coo-ee,' she cried to a hard-faced old lord as his carriage pushed past. ''Ere we are, Henery – smile at your Susie. Not him! He don't smile once a month for all his money.' She and her friends cheered most of the guests in a gay, friendly and critical sort of way. 'There y'are, 'oorah! I do like to see a kerrage and pair after all them motors. Put on your gloves, dear. You'll be there in a minute. Nice – ain't she?' She approved, but critically. Once she was really shocked, declaring that a footman had wiped his nose on his glove and that wasn't manners. It was extraordinary to see how her chaffing broke down before Queen Alexandra. 'Ow, you *dear* old dear!' she cried, as the coach

THE CENOTAPH, 1919

went slowly past. 'That's her – always goes slow so you can see her. She'd stick her head out the carriage window if she got half a chance.' About Queen Mary she said – 'Naice, sitting there with her two sons.' She had some sharp things to say about many of the eminent people who went past. 'Hallo!' she shouted to a very grand lady in a carriage, 'who's that with you? That ain't your husband, Flossie! Nice carry-on at a royal procession. I'm going to put a lot to-dy down in my diary. I'm keeping a diary, you know – same's Margot. It won't half make a sensation in East Ham when it's printed, I promise you.'

This was greeted with great joy by her friends, who now numbered the whole ledge on which she was seated and all the railings and a good bit of the pavement. She got a little out of hand when she elaborated the possible consequences of this wedding and weddings in general, but when the crowd somehow indicated when she was too Rabelaisian she said, 'Well, I'm going to talk genteel now, just like I did before.' 'There he is! Al-fred, wiv your fevvered hat and jewels. Here we are. We're all here. Smile a bit, can't you?' She prophesied what she was going to say when the Princess would pass. 'Princess – Princess Mary. You'll be Mrs. Lascelles, my love, in a minute . . . and when she hears me shouting out she'll stick her head out the window thinking it's a bomb going off. You'll see.' But when the Princess came along with her glittering escort and grand coach collecting all the sunshine out of the dark lavender sky, and we had a glimpse of the delicate costume and the bright face with a wavering smile, the lady from East Ham was all eyes and said nothing at all.

III

While it is admittedly impossible to give a typical Londoner, the lady from East Ham may properly be identified as a foreground figure whose presence gives life and emphasis to the pictures of London that remain in one's mind. There is another sort of London foreground figure less lively but better known because their occupation keeps them always in public view at a particular spot and whose disappearance we feel is a personal grievance. There were, for instance, almost up to the War years, Mother Kitchen and Mother Bury, who kept the milk-stall in St. James's Park. No record existed how long the stall had been there, but the old ladies believed that their family had been given the privilege of the site in the Mall by Charles II, because they had given a glass of milk to his father when the White King was being marched across the Park to his execution at Whitehall. The stall, at any rate, had been in the family for several generations, and middle-aged people can remember their two cows they kept there to milk. 'Buy a glass of red cow's milk,' they used to cry. Old Londoners used to remember how they sold syllabub here. Morland made a charming print of their ancestress with cows. When the new Mall was made they were turned out. The old ladies sat all night on their ginger-beer boxes, with their cow beside them, while the old railing, to which their cow had been tethered, and the friendly tree which had shaded them, were brought down. All London was stirred, and the Office of Works in the end was forced to grant them a stall at the lake for the rest of their lives.

Ancient rights and vested interests of a humble kind now and again get publicity in the Press, but the extent of them is not

realized. Nearly all newspaper-sellers and flower-sellers with a settled pitch where they display their papers or place their flower-baskets have established by some means or other a recognized right to their position, and in many cases could sell them at a good figure. Newspaper stances near an inn of court or hotel and flower-sellers' near a hospital are most prized. In a number of cases the pitch has been seized and held against all comers in the past by some ancestor of the present holder. A few pavement artists, too, have established a right to certain well-placed flags by favour of police. There are unauthorized men who attach themselves to a particular tavern simply by being always somewhere about the door, and after they have been sent an errand or two and helped a tired customer to a taxi-cab, they somehow come to be accepted, even by the landlord, as having some sort of right to be there, and by touching their hats to regular customers they establish a tip-giving circle; if a new landlord comes, their position is usually consolidated as one of the fixtures. London is full of Silas Weggs with claims as unsubstantiated as many of our oldest landowners. Often they are known to cabmen and kerb-folk by the name of the tavern to which they have connected themselves. There was one middle-aged nondescript in Parliament Street known as 'Red Lion,' because he was always on call there and fetched cabs for the house. Usually he did nothing but polish his nose with a red cotton handkerchief. One day Fate took the Red Lion in hand, sending a party of runners and stokers to the tavern on their way to Victoria Station to take train to a port where two new Russian storeships were going east at the time of the Russo-Japanese war. The Red Lion that day found life blossoming

unto him in quarts and pints, and he departed in the midst of a hilarious band. There was some public interest in the event, and I went to the station to see the train go. It was a confused, swarming, noisy scene, seamen and friends and followers, and there in a crowded carriage, with his arm round a seaman's neck, joining in a bawling sea-chorus, was the Red Lion, flushed and happy. He never came back again, and as the ships were taken by the Japanese, he probably found in Tokio or Kobe or somewhere his old familiar sign. I like to think of him in a kimono outside a shop with a Red Lion sign regarding the eastern world without curiosity and calling rickshaws.

It would be curious if all sorts of queer privileges and posts were not claimed and accepted in such a city as London, with its rights of ancient lights, its sale of sites on 999 years' leases, and the fact that in London to-day, if you search for it, you can find, worn as a regular costume, not as fancy dress, some costume of nearly every period from the reign of Henry VII to that of Queen Victoria. The last point seems incredible, but I think it is probably understated rather than overstated. The Lord Chancellor's robes date at least from Henry VII; the Yeoman of the Guard from Henry VIII; the Blue-coat boy's costume is that of a servitor of Edward VI; bishops and City councillors look much the same in prints of Elizabeth's reign. I shall leave the Jameses and Charleses to the learned men to sort out such uniforms as that of the Life Guards' Band with dark blue jockey cap and long gold-braided doublet and jackboots, and the dress of many City company dignitaries, and pass to the judge's full-bottomed wig and gown of William and Mary period, the

counsel's wig and gown of Queen Anne, and the beautiful costume of the Children of the Chapel Royal and girls of the Foundling Hospital. The Doggett Coat that is raced for on the Thames every year dates from George I; and our present Court costume and the liveries of the Mansion House footmen belong to the Regency or the reign of George IV. It might be a good game for amateurs of London to try who can find the greatest number of such ancient costumes still existing in London. How many pure Victorian costumes does one notice in the streets? Soldiers of most regiments, bank messengers and walk-clerks, firemen with their brass helmets, city policemen, toastmasters, butlers, fish-porters, Eton boys, Epping Forest rangers, waiters, and so on. But it is to be noted that, except in a few charitable institutions and in religious bodies, female dress never became static at any period.

A queer survival of a supposed ancient right was the elderly man who swept the little passage between Lansdowne House and Devonshire House, a narrow right-of-way from Berkeley Street to Stratton Street, through which, according to tradition, a mounted highwayman once escaped, hence the upright iron bar at the east entrance to prevent it happening again. Some one had given the sweeper an old huntsman's coat and cap, and he was an odd figure, as odd as the passage he swept. He came into the police court once as a witness, and the judge was amazed at his appearance, as this dialogue shows:

THE JUDGE: Are you a field-marshal?

THE MAN: No, my lord. I am the sweeper of Lansdowne Passage.

THE JUDGE: Very well then.

The elderly sweeper has gone now, and the passage itself is about to go.

The stout woman whipminder of Covent Garden Market will probably be the last of the long succession of minders who have guarded the whips, and, when required, given correct information as to the tavern where the owners were, ever since there was a market.

An excellent beadle of the Royal Opera Arcade in Pall Mall (which has long survived the Royal Opera House there) still parades that elegant little-known corridor, giving his salute to the famous personages who go to the discreet barber's shop there with the wax bust of the lovely gentleman in Dundreary whiskers – auburn and silky – staring impassively from the window like the last of the milors.

But as an animate London memorial the most interesting of all was, I think, the old lady of Charing Cross. All observant Londoners knew her. She had been an institution of West London for more than half a century. She sold newspapers at Charing Cross. She once told me that when she was a baby her mother used to nurse her in her arms as she sold newspapers outside old Northumberland House, in the Strand. Northumberland House was pulled down, the Percy lion went to wag its tail at Isleworth, and the family pitch of this newspaper dynasty was removed to Charing Cross. There it remained until the buses made things too busy, so the pitch was moved again to the rounded headland where Northumberland Avenue curves into Charing Cross.

She was a little old woman, over seventy, but well preserved, keeping the red in her cheeks like a country-woman almost to

the end, and with a pair of blue eyes – remarkably blue, like forget-me-nots. You used to see her in all sorts of weather sitting there on a little kitchen chair, a curiously domestic figure in the centre of the world. She had taken the chair at Charing Cross for as long as anyone could remember, and, sitting quietly there with her papers, or standing on her chair when there was a procession (vacating the chair, like the Speaker, when there was disorder), she had seen London history. She had seen the Trafalgar Square riots, when Mr. Cunninghame Graham and Mr. John Burns fought the police, and she had seen all the women's suffrage riots, and all that had taken place between these events. She must have seen the Garibaldi pass, possibly even Wellington, and General Gordon, and other figures in the flesh which afterwards appeared in stone or bronze over in the Square. You can conceive her as a sibyl, or as the ancient spirit of London holding a review in Trafalgar Square, with all the notables of the world filing past her.

When the advent of the motor-bus drove her from her old place down Charing Cross, the lamp-post against which her rickety old chair used to stand was also removed, and the kerb-stone was marked to show, I suppose, where the gas-pipe was. That mark, which is in the form of a cross, is still there, and the cross will remain until it is rubbed out by people's feet as a memorial of the Old Lady of Charing Cross.

As a Londoner, however, rather than a London memorial, she had her superior in the Old Lady of Fleet Street. She could only have existed in a great capital. Conceive a little woman, carefully and tastefully dressed in worn-out clothes, with a neat bonnet, carrying a tray of collar-studs, matches, pipe-cleaners,

and such little articles. With her clear skin, a touch of red on each cheek, and silvery hair, she reminded you of a Dresden china figure that had been rather roughly used. Most remarkable of all was her smile, a sweet smile of sociability and self-respect, which she did not keep for her regular customers, but for anyone who conversed with her. All the other kerb-hawkers sought her society when they could, and after lunch-time, when trade was quieter, she used to hold a little court in the flagged passage at St. Bride's church, and the hawkers would hold her tray while she set her bonnet straight and would tell her loudly – she was rather deaf – of their luck and of the new iniquities of the police and the motor-buses. She was a ruling figure in a big circle, holding her position by her charm and social tact and her good looks in an environment and occupation that ought humanly to have left nothing but anxiety and hardness.

Down in Dockland there was – perhaps still is – a woman who resembled her, though not in appearance, for Mary of Canton Street was a little hunchback creature who never had time to think of her dress. She was the drudge of a boarding-house where needy sea apprentices stayed when they came ashore to attend the sea-coaches and face their examinations as second mate. It was a dingy place that even the second-rate performers of the third-rate local music-hall would not go to except when they had been unfortunate in their betting, yet even ship captains and chief engineers, to the abashment of the youngsters, would occasionally look in when their ship was in dock. They came to see Mary, and to look at the loose, dingy, fly-marked mirror which was a focus of the Seven Seas. Round its glass, where many a brassbounder had taken a serious look at himself

before going to face the dread examiners with their new gadgets, were letters with strange stamps and postmarks, some over a year old, a few much older than that. One I remember with the 'Mr.' carefully crossed out and 'Captain' substituted in Mary's scrawling hand, showing how events had marched since friends last met. Iquique, Bahia, Riga, San Francisco, Bilbao, Montreal, Hankow, Galveston, and most of the world's ports, had been seen in postmarks round this tarnished mirror or in the pile of letters on the mantelshelf. Mary looked after these letters; a number of them were addressed simply 'Care of Mary, 200a, Canton Street, London.' There were other and official rendezvous for seamen's and ships' officers' letters, but these lads are doubtful of everything but personal relationships, so they held to Mary for this service. And for more than that, for Mary spent laborious hours following the ships of her lads over the world by the news from the comings and goings of mariners in the district, and by loans of *Lloyd's Shipping Gazette*. She had always some knowledge where the ships were, and who had left the old *Strathendrick* and got a berth on the *Concordia*, and why the *Red Rock* had not returned, and the innumerable changes in the personnel of tramp shipping. So Mary of Canton Street with her inexhaustible patience and kindness did service for these lads whose lives were hard, with few edifying women in them, for it was not the *Conway-Worcester* type of the Mercantile Marine who came to Canton Street, but mainly a needy lot, some of them after many years before the mast, who were making their bid for the quarter-deck late in their seafaring life. Many mariners would come to Canton Street on the chance of letters, but mainly for a gossip with Mary about the lads: who

had got promotion, who had got into trouble; who had swallowed the anchor, and who was drowned. And Mary would do little offices for them, buy a present for a sweetheart, or lend a hand in correspondence, or do some clothing repairs, or give advice about etiquette or irregular affairs. She was human and kindly and honest, and the best woman many of these young men were likely to know. She will be missed in many ports and seas when the news comes that Mary is no more in Canton Street.

IV

All great cities have the gift of anonymity for those who seek it, but in London, where districts are so widely separated and interests so plentiful, there is the added reticence of the English character and his desire to make his home his castle, and the gift comes almost without seeking. It is a commonplace that most Londoners do not know the name of their next-door neighbours, the main exceptions to this being among the very rich or the very poor; many know nothing about the private life of their business colleagues, and are usually surprised to hear that a well-known man lives in their district. You may know a man for years without learning whether he is married or single. That is a sign of a very large city, for it is only where distances are great that the male is usually free from his home ties for the day, mixing his social and business arrangements in the metropolitan manner, returning at night to his home, which may be elsewhere, for thousands of middle-class London men have their homes in Brighton or Guildford or Sevenoaks, or in enlarged old towns and villages in Bucks or Hertfordshire. The

tendency of a great community is to make for smoothness in the conduct of life, for the social units are usually so many that you need not meet the same discomforts twice; people find it easy to surround themselves with a circle of others of like type, and social cotton-wool is in constant use. Understatement, the humour of the Londoner, is really only a form of self-defence.

In a London street see your real Cockney moving like an eel through the press, hardly touching as he goes, always giving way yet always going on with an eye impersonal and interested at the same time. He is used to blocks, scents them before he is entangled, knows the alternative ways to anywhere, never asks questions except derisive ones, for he has learnt early that nobody really knows till next day what has happened. But the average London man of the street will accept and make fixed ideas of dramatic, dubious stories of big events. 'The Kaiser said he would eat his Christmas dinner at Buckingham Palace. What about that?' was a common question in 1914. 'Kitchener wasn't drowned. He's a prisoner in Germany. I know a man who seen a letter from a man in the same camp.' He keeps his credulity for large romantic things, especially for dreams and portents about race-horses, and he has a pathetic belief that some day the tipster of his favourite newspaper will make him a rich man. But that is a digression. In London, the largest of all cities, a man can only get about by minding his own business, and he learns that lesson too well.

Public opinion, except in the very poor quarters, hardly exists in the sense that it exists in an ordinary city, and men of reputation and position who elsewhere would be forced by public opinion to play their part in civic affairs and on the bench never

even trouble to vote, and their only appearance at a police court is probably as defendant for motoring too fast. 'Who is the Londoner's eminent fellow-citizen?' has been posed as a question that is inconceivable. Yet take a hundred good men from the London suburbs and set them down in a country town – what a figure they would cut! They would distribute prizes, move resolutions, make pulverizing anti-Socialist or Socialist speeches, present drill-halls, give profound judgments from the bench, resist or impose some sorts of oppression, and the town newspapers would print their speeches in full and they would be labelled as 'our eminent fellow-citizen.' But in London no one knows much about them or even of the really eminent until one finds out in a roundabout way that Sir James Frazer of the *Golden Bough* has left the Temple where he had been living for years, or by the news of his death learns that Hudson the great bird-lover and wanderer had long lived in a Bayswater terrace. How many people – despite the modern gossip columns in the newspapers – know where our celebrities live? If you look up *Who's Who*, you will find that the only address given of some of the most distinguished is 'care of' their publisher. This brings me to the point that London is the only city in the country with a large number of people with telephones who will not allow their names to appear in the telephone-book. There are few houses in inner London with the name of the householder on the door, and there are many districts where it is almost impossible to get the names of the residents. And any visitor to London who expects to get the address of a relative at his place of business will draw the blankest refusal. The double life must be more easy to live in London than anywhere. The cases that

are found out appear in police news, but from the length of time in which it appeared they were practised before discovery, it is fair to assume that very many cases are never disclosed. I have read a number of instances where the man maintained two households in the same district.

But it is the innocent double life that circumstances and the national characteristics have forced on so many middle-class Londoners that is, I think, the strangest product of the place. The disconnection between the business life and home because of the distances has curious results. Smith lives in West Norwood and is a consulting engineer in Victoria Street. Gradually he finds himself one of a group of eight or nine men of the region whom he gets to know through business or chance, and they lunch together nearly every day. A social unit is created, they come to call one another by Christian name, even by nickname: their conversation is mainly on minor business points, jokes about Scotsmen and Jews, restaurants, drinks, motor-cars, tobacco, the latest murder, old popular songs, music-halls, theatres, the Derby, repartees, novelties in metal pencils or note-cases. The game is confined to the pawns; politics and religion, the large pieces are rarely moved; art, poetry, and love are not on the board at all. In the unit I have in mind women are rarely mentioned and the salt joke is almost extinct. The group may continue to meet for twenty years with changes. One man will turn up in black and the others will learn somehow that his wife is dead and that is the first they have heard of her. I have heard of cases where Tom or Bill or 'Pumps' would simply fall out, and whether he had gone elsewhere or had dropped dead no one knew. One will say: 'We haven't seen much of Tom

(or Bill or "Pumps") lately. Wonder what he's after?' And oblivion will close over the missing one except where one of the others may meet him again by the chance of a golf-draw at Brighton, and learn that the absentee's firm has now organized a luncheon inside the office, or some one reads an obituary of him in a newspaper and finds that he had done something showy in the War, and was an authority on Hydro-Electric Ship-Propulsion.

These units exist in large numbers in many varieties all over London, meeting in restaurants, clubs, and tea-shops, apparently old friends with common ties and passwords, spending a fair slice of their sojourn on this earth together, yet with no join between that life and their warmer life elsewhere. Not only do many Londoners lead this innocent double life, but sometimes they have two names. A man becoming proprietor of Blank's business may become known by the name of the firm accepting the demands of customers by visit and by telephone to speak to Mr. Blank himself. The Englishman's inclination not to explain himself and not to fuss is at its strongest in London. Being in London is a little like being in a ship. You are supposed to know, and it is bad manners to ask questions.

As an illustration of the casualness of a Londoner about his own identity and his appalling good nature, I may give the case of A. E. Prince, a little office manager of a group of small agency businesses in the City. There were three of them where Mr. Prince presided and worked for them all, but he was employed by one firm who charged the others for his services. For some reason this arrangement terminated and one of the other firms went elsewhere, and Mr. Prince went with it. After

some years he married, and his employer thought so much of him that he presented him with a 'handsome black marble clock,' of course, with a tablet on it engraved with his name and good wishes. Mr. Prince received it with gratitude, but latterly he asked if his right name could be put on it, as his bride would not like it as it was. The agent, much surprised, asked what his real name was. He had always known him as 'Mr. Prince,' and every one called him 'Mr. Prince.' What was the point? The point was, it turned out, that his name was Albert Edward Brown. His friends had jocularly called him 'Prince' because of the Albert Edward. A new office-boy heard him called 'Prince,' so 'Mr. Prince' began, and other office-boys, of course, did the same. He had noticed the spread of the habit gradually, and then when the change of office came he didn't like to put his new employer right. He was not a one to fuss. And so it came about that he accepted 'Mr. Prince,' and only the wedding could have brought him to the point of explanation. He had reached a double life by pure inadvertence and hatred of fuss.

There I must leave the Londoners, feeling painfully conscious how inadequately one has faced the subject. Who can put a compass over Leviathan?

THE CLUB STREETS

LONDON HAS HUNDREDS OF SPECIALIZED AND CHARACTERISTIC streets that could exist nowhere else, demanding as they do an area of support that could only be possible in a very great city and having a character that is patently English and metropolitan. There are streets of publishers, of fish-merchants, of bedding manufacturers, of idol-merchants, of tea-dealers, of stockbrokers, doctors, fur-traders, fruiterers, dog-sellers, and scores of other professions and trades. The mediæval city system of prescribed quarters for each trade still lingers voluntarily in London, although the quarters sometimes change, as with publishing, which is moving from Paternoster Row to Bloomsbury, and silversmiths who have departed from Fleet Street and the Strand. You will still find in some parts prosperous remnants of a trade that once occupied the whole neighbourhood but passed elsewhere with the change in the lives of the population. One of the oddest things in the London of to-day is the group of millinery and drapery shops in St. Paul's Churchyard, a relic of the pre-Fire London when this district was a centre of the mercery trade. When people ceased to live in the City and very few middle-class women ever ventured there, these shops must have had thin times. It was such a long way for a carriage to come from Denmark Hill or Highbury or Clapham, and the horses would get cold waiting and the enamel of the brougham or landau would run fearful risks in the rough City traffic. However, the shops have survived and prospered, and have now reached a time when about a quarter of the City day population is women. There is a pleasant mid-Victorian flavour about this part, with its pastry-cook's shop with 'Routs supplied' on its inside sign, and knick-knack shops, and societies

that receive subscriptions 'for the blacks' – I am sure I have seen here a cabman with a blue ribbon in his buttonhole. There is a congenial twisted little street that connects St. Paul's Churchyard with St. Paul's Station, a street with little shops where you can buy a pint of shrimps, or watercress, or a glass epergne or six-bottled cruet, to take home to Blackheath or Dulwich.

In the West End a characteristic that one notices all the more as it is passing away is its distinctively male and female streets, even districts. Old Regent Street at one time had not a single tobacco-shop, and even to-day the Strand has not a shop where a woman can buy a blouse or a reel of cotton. Nobody decrees these things except the Spirit of the place. Millions of smoking gentlemen in their time have promenaded Regent Street, and the Strand has always had its actresses and chorus-girls and hotel population. Sackville Street and Savile Row are still exclusively male, and Sloane Street almost exclusively female. Panton Street, Haymarket, until the other day, was perhaps the most comprehensively male street in town. It begins with a famous repository of chutnees, pickles, sharks' fins, *bêche-de-mer*, cocks' combs, caviare, and elephant's foot jelly, and its chief restaurant, a very old-fashioned place of the Tom-and-Jerry period and aspect, will not allow a woman within its doors; its finest shop sells only men's braces ; military and naval prints, guns, sporting boots, camp outfits, tobacco and snuff, and family plate, occupy its other shopkeepers.

Then there are the club streets. I like Charles Street best, its one end opening on the gardens of St. James's Square, with its equestrian statue on its Portland stone block, and the vista the other way ending with Nash's sedately elegant Haymarket

PICCADILLY NIGHT—THE SAVILE CLUB

Theatre. On the north side the Junior United Service Club dominates the street with its handsome Victorian façade and impressive bronze lamp-standards, and on the other side the funny little entrance to the always almost deserted Royal Opera Arcade discloses a perspective like a linear drawing of the forties, and further along is the discreet brick face of the Caledonian Club. The street most charged with town romance is, of course, St. James's Street, with the old brick palace of the Tudors at the bottom and Whig and Tory clubs guarding the approach, and the venerable shops of Lock's the hatters and Berry's the wine-merchants, and the air of macaroni fantasy that has never quite left the street. Nor ever can leave it. Its slope and leisurely pavement and the diamond-shaped clock on the palace gateway provoke a strut in the wits as well as the legs. Sir Herbert Tree was much at home there. A young gentleman passing up this street met the actor, who had just come out from a club with his hat in his hand. They spoke and the young gentleman, rather at a loss what to say, remarked as he looked at the red lining of Tree's hat, 'What a nice lining your hat has!' 'You like it?' asked Tree with a rich, generous accent; 'then it is yours.' He tore out the lining of his hat, presented it to him, and strode away, leaving a dismayed young gentleman on the pavement of St. James's Street holding a red hat-lining in his hand. There are many old stories of the street, but that modern one is as appropriate as any.

But the most clubby street of all is, of course, Pall Mall. Pall Mall! It sounds like no other street, and it is like no other street in the world. Its name came from a game played by Stuart princes near their palace, and it has been a street of gallant

leisure to those nearest the Court for nigh 300 years. The palace of the Tudors is at one end, and Trafalgar Square at the other. Marlborough House, where the great Duke lived, and where the eldest son of Queen Victoria took up house on his marriage, and remained until he became King, has its gates entering on its western end. Pepys wrote of it as a place for clubbing, and even to-day it is virtually a street of clubs. The club is an English institution, and although it has spread all over the world, there is no city except London that has a whole street of clubs. They set the tone and pace of the street.

Ordinarily, this is a street of leisure, where people walk with pleasure and expect every yard or two to see a friend. The returned Anglo-Indian, or big-game hunter from Africa, or official from distant parts of the earth, does not feel that he is back in London till he has taken his lean brown face along Pall Mall, and exchanged nods with old friends and (if in an expansive mood) a word or two with the old commissionaire of his club. Pall Mall was home to most of the originals of Kipling's stories. Truly the unknown poet expressed the *cri-de-cœur* of his countrymen when he wrote:

'There's no place like club.'

Most of these 'material monasteries' (in Mr. Lucas's fine phrase) date from the first half of last century. The United Service Club, on the east side of Waterloo Place, was the Duke of Wellington's favourite club, and the members benefited by his intrepidity, for here he bearded the Committee and had the price of the midday chop reduced to a shilling. Peace hath her victories. On the other side of Waterloo Place is the Athenæum,

guarded by Minerva over the porch, the only lady who has so far taken a permanent place in a Pall Mall club. The club-house is the work of Decimus Burton, who built the Hyde Park Corner entrance, and it has the finest club library in London. Membership of the Athenæum connotes eminence in the Arts or in the Church. It is a favourite retreat to-day of Sir James Barrie, and there, in an atmosphere of Anglican bishops and the greatest living authorities on the most difficult subjects, and guarded by their silence, Sir James writes his fairy stories and his Scots dialect romances. Many eminent Americans have been members there, and Mr. Henry James has described its peace in phrases as soporific as its writing-room. It is within fairly recent memory that smoking came to be permitted within its precincts.

Next to the Athenæum is Barry's Travellers' Club. Its membership is limited to those who have travelled at least 500 miles, a much easier qualification nowadays than when the club was formed, but it is still a very exclusive body and keeps out of the newspapers. Then comes the Reform – also by Barry – with its grim Italianate exterior that recalls the Farnese Palace in Rome. It looks like a place of secrets, but is really the final gesture of the Whig Party, and it now houses such democratic figures as Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr. Wells. The Carlton Club, separated from the Reform by a little alley, is a more ornate edifice, which lately changed its coat of Caen stone and polished granite for one of well-cut Portland stone designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield. Every Conservative Member of Parliament is eligible for membership.

The Marlborough Club, at No. 52, was established not long after his marriage by that Prince of Wales who was afterwards

Edward VII. Every candidate for membership had to be approved by the Prince, who found at this club, a few steps from his own door, a place where he could meet his friends without ceremony. It was the custom in the club that he was treated only as a fellow-member, and it was considered bad form if anyone put down his newspaper when he entered the room. He often sat in the bow-window overlooking Pall Mall, but his favourite place was in a room on the ground floor. The club has been little changed, and it still has the steel engravings and comfortable furniture of the mid-Victorian period, and the members still dine at separate square tables with well-oiled castors, so that when one member desires company at his meal he simply pushes his table along until it joins his friend's.

Next to the Marlborough Club, and separated by the entrance to the little inlet of Pall Mall Court, the Guaranty Trust's office occupies the site of one of the most famous London literary rendezvous of the eighteenth century – the bookshop with the sign of 'Tully's Head.' It was kept by Robert Dodsley, footman, poet, and playwright, who made enough money by these three activities to set up here as a publisher and bookseller. He published Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and several other works which 'struck the gong of London' in those days. In this shop was published the first volume of the *Annual Register* under the editorship of Edmund Burke, a compendium of information and selective taste which has lived well over a century. The shop was one of the sunniest slopes of Parnassus for many years. Pope, Johnson, Burke, Chesterfield, Goldsmith, Sterne, Horace Walpole, Garrick, Reynolds, and other great ones of the period, met often at 'Tully's Head,' and stayed late. No. 51 must have

been at that time a near approach to the Mermaid Tavern in Shakespeare's day.

But to return to our clubs. Pall Mall also houses the Junior Carlton, whose windows look out on St. James's Square. 'Junior' does not mean that the members are youths, as anyone can see for himself by looking up at the honourable heads at the windows. It only means that, as a club, it is junior to the original club, although the majority of the members may at one time or other be the elder brethren of the senior club members. There is, too, the Oxford and Cambridge Club, and the New Oxford and Cambridge Club (which overlooks Marlborough House), for which members of these ancient universities only are eligible. The parent club has a famous staircase and a series of panels over the upper windows which are understood to be in the best classic manner, and it was designed by the brothers Smirke. The United University Club, at the corner of Suffolk Street, was reconstructed recently to the designs of Sir Reginald Blomfield, and is an interesting piece of modern scholarly club architecture. The old and the new work in the building bring about some curious results, and there is an Edwardian legend of a guest who was separated from his host after dinner and is believed to be wandering about the passages there to this very day. The Guards' Club has recently deserted its narrow, bow-fronted building in which Disraeli, Ouida, and so many novelists of last century loved to depict their heroes. Then there is the Royal Automobile Club, with its 16,000 members, which has swallowed up half a dozen old club buildings and is an Imperial club that rather suggests a railway station in Utopia.

It is a man's street, clubs and cigar-shops, and wine-merchants

and military tailors and bootmakers, and one shop sells nothing but swords. But there are women whose memories live in the street, and give it some of its golden light and shade. There was Nell Gwynn, orange-seller, player, mistress to a king, mother of a duke, a favourite of the people, whose kind thought gave London the adornment of Wren's Chelsea Hospital, which has sheltered old warriors for over 200 years. She lived at No. 79, on the north side, and at the foot of her garden she once leant over her wall and had a saucy talk with Charles II, walking in the Mall, as the scandalized Evelyn reports in his journal. Her house was swept away long ago, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sanctified the spot with its headquarters; but even the godly Bishop Cox, of New York, who stayed in the house in 1850, let his thoughts stray to that Mistress Nelly, and came to the conclusion that mercy would be found for her. On the north side she lived for some time in a house whose site is now occupied by the Army and Navy Club, and the mirror that reflected her fair and provoking face hung there for awhile.

Next to Nell Gwynn's house, in a building that still exists, although shorn of one wing, another lost lady of old years held a sort of court. Emma Lyon, a Cheshire village girl, who after many adventures became Lady Hamilton, figured here as Hygeia in the 'Temple of Health' of a quack doctor named Graham. There Gainsborough saw her, and in his studio, which was in the same building, he painted her as 'Musidora Bathing,' in the picture that is now in the National Gallery. Cosway painted her too, and later Romney began his great series of pictures with the 'divine' Emma as his theme. It was in Naples

that Nelson met her. And to-day, in Christie's auction-rooms in King Street, a stone's-throw away, collectors still scramble for her letters, and her face in millions of reproductions haunts the world. Nelson loved her. Hers was the face that launched a thousand ships. Some say that she inspired him (Nelson said so) as she inspired Romney. She is lighted down the ages by the blaze of Nelson's fame and the glow of Romney and Gainsborough's art. Time cannot close his shadows over her beauty.

Gainsborough died in that Dutch-looking house, old red brick and stone dressings and its caryatided porch, and, according to the story, he said to his rival, the great Sir Joshua, at his bedside, 'We are all going to heaven, and Van Dyck is of the company.' The Duke of Cumberland lived here after Culloden, and in a house somewhere in the street Charles Edward Stuart, 'Bonnie Prince Charlie,' the man the Duke vanquished, is said to have held a secret meeting of his remaining friends four years after the battle. He would not then have had the long springy step of the Wanderer in poor tartans who marched and hid in the Islands after Culloden, for the 'lad that was born to be king' was already sinking under dissipation and frustrated hopes. The trumpets and drums from St. James's Palace probably sounded out as they sat at the meeting, and the last of the Stuarts would look at the faithful fifty who were there and think of the thousands that lay under the heather. One imagines a disguised figure stepping along Pall Mall, perhaps through the queer, narrow, lackey-haunted passage of Pall Mall Court, that still keeps some of its eighteenth-century air, and away to his lurking coach or sedan-chair, and so farewell to England.

Pall Mall is a street in which history never has a holiday.

SHOPS

I

THE ANTIQUITY OF A SHOP AND ITS TRADITIONS AND RELICS, its struggles, vicissitudes, and triumphs, are surely more interesting to the correct mind than the story of mediæval castles with their plots of obscure motives and maniacal violence and psychology of an alien time. The shop, if not the real romantic stuff, is a fabric shot with curious patterns, with the scarlet and gold of Lord Mayordom at its heart and fringes of exotic conventions. It contains everything from economics to superstitions. Even a comparatively modern shop like Liberty's, for example, has an Eastern idol that has to do with the luck of the house, and in bad times the shopmen would put offerings in his bowl, and when the electric cranes set up Ye Olde English Mansion for the firm in Great Marlborough Street the shopmen bore the god in triumph to his new home. The four Chinese gods that sat for fifty years over the fascia of Liberty's East India House, which found favour with Rossetti and Whistler and Watts, were thought also to be linked with the fortunes of the business, and are being reproduced for the façade of the new Regent Street building. But nearly every big shop of any age has its totem that is half-jokingly, half-seriously regarded, the prudent deciding to take no risks. The tragedies of great businesses which fathers build up and sons pull down, of the marriage alliances of scions of such houses, of bold invaders from across the Atlantic that came to live in the mansion of the proudest family of England, a house in which, till our day, it was said, no tradesman had ever sat down, are too like the stories of the English country-side to have an interest of their own. But the family of the dynasties of shopkeepers who take

their house as a trust and their assistants as cadets is an attractive though rare feature that distinguishes and sweetens a part of London life.

Being a 'nation of shopkeepers,' it is natural that London tradesmen should take pride in the pedigree of their houses. There is no other capital where shops are so often dated as they are in London. 'Established eighteen-something,' 'Established over fifty years,' 'Established over a hundred years,' and so on, appear on fascia or window of most shops of any character (except, for some reason or other, shops for ladies' dress), and one careful wine-merchant in Regent Street announces 'Established in 1667 A.D.!' The object presumably is to convince people that there is nothing flyaway or mushroom about the business. Here they are and here they rest.

A gentleman from a newer region settling in London, struck by these quiet advertisements in the face of its shops, decided to buy his household commodities only from houses that had been in business for at least 200 years. He found that he could buy his tea, wine, bread, tobacco, groceries, string, boots, clothes, jewellery, gloves, hats, plate, pictures, dustbins, haberdashery, paints, violins, fishing-tackle, books, fish-sauce, drugs, wigs, saddles, chairs, clocks, confections, glass, fire-engines, and many other things, from firms that had been in business for longer than 200 years. He found, indeed, that he often had a choice. He could choose, for instance, between a tea-shop that had had a principal painted by Hogarth and a rival that had owned the tea that the Yankees threw into Boston harbour and so began the events that separated England from her southern colony in North America. He could buy violins from Hill's in

BERRY'S SHOP

Bond Street that supplied Mr. Pepys, and wine from Berry's in St. James's Street that supplied Queen Anne, and probably had had the earliest intimation of her death, a deep, low-roofed shop that not only supplied coffee, wine, and brandies to the eighteenth-century nobility of St. James's, but weighed and measured its customers, and there they are, 30,000 entries in sixteen tall folio volumes, with the two great weighing scales (one dating from the seventeenth century) and height post, still in the front shop and used by the present princes over the way. The Prince Regent has a page in dandified writing, and from 1791 to 1804 his weight varied, at one time over 17 stone, but only 13 stone 3 pounds on the last recorded visit. The elder Pitt's weight was 11 stone 11½ pounds 'shoes and frock'; Byron in 1806, 13 stone 12 pounds; Fox in 1781, 14 stone. The cellars of Berry's were probably part of Old St. James's Palace – something like a shop! Several wine-dealers were qualified and many tobacconists, for these are meditative, differentiating trades that are the better served with an aroma of tradition and old confidential relations. That exquisite old tobacco-shop in the Haymarket that has so marvellously preserved itself, with its many-paned, pot-bellied little windows, its narrow door with a fanlight and two little steps up from the street, and its open Adams screen separating the shop from the office, has sent snuff to all the crowned noses in Europe, and had made even Napoleon sneeze. Near Friburg and Treyer's is Wishart's tobacco-shop, once in the Haymarket, now in Panton Street. Its ancient sign is a Highlander in Stuart tartan, not in a kilt, but in trews, and according to the tradition of the house, it is a portrait of the Old Pretender. If so, Wishart's must have

had difficult days, especially when the Young Pretender reached Derby and London was mustering the trained bands. At that time the tobacconists who sold Scots snuff and were known as the rendezvous of Scotsmen were wrecked by the mob, and their wooden Highlanders, if they existed then, would probably be burnt. David Wishart, the founder, opened his shop on the day Charles Edward Stuart was born.

Fleet Street has two tobacco-shops with long pedigree, although one of them has no close connection between its past and present tobacconists. However, the name HARDHAM still stands over the shop at the corner of Ludgate Circus, and on the narrow old counter snuff is still weighed by hand-scales from battered brown jars with such enticing names as 'St. Domingo Carrotte,' 'Martinique,' and 'Proctor's Mixture.' Reynolds, Johnson, and others of 'The Club' went to Hardham's, and you can see the old snuffmaker's tombstone at Chichester, with a lengthy elegant epitaph by the great Garrick. But more of the old personal tradition lingers about Redford's shop at the corner of Wine Office Court. You usually see 'a gentleman connected with the Press' (as the phrase used to go) seated on one or other of the two long, mellow mahogany chests which had crossed the ocean crammed with thousands of cigars before the Cuban growers thought of small cigar-boxes. There is always conversation going on, and sometimes a gentleman from Virginia who has been lunching at the Cheshire Cheese up the court drops in, and lighting his green cigar at the little iron gas-jet in the shape of an elephant's head, gives some news of the plantations. It is a pleasant shop, Redford's, with a good pedigree from 'William Hoare, the only apprentice of John

Hardham Deceased,' as the original sign, painted on metal embellished with the symbol of the Ship and Star, declares in the window. Another fine, friendly tobacco-shop – although my friend with the pedigree passion would have scorned it – was in Rupert Street, Soho, off Leicester Square, consisting of a small front shop adorned with a miniature wooden Highlander on a bracket, and a small square back room with a decrepit horsehair arm-chair and a pedestal mahogany table. It was, in brief, the cigar divan in which Robert Louis Stevenson had set Mr. T. Goodall, the ex-Prince Florizel of his *New Arabian Nights*. Prince Florizel was founded on Edward, Prince of Wales. Old 'Happy and Glorious' one of the disrespectful young men of 'The Dynamiter' calls him. The book is full of clues.

But the connection between this shop and the Prince of Wales in his more Bohemian moments is a real one. In that capacious horsehair arm-chair in the back shop the Prince had sat after midnight, and that pedestal mahogany table had borne beverages for his refreshment. It happened in the seventies, when the Prince conceived a fancy for going out with the London Fire Brigade, and at the end of these adventures he desired refreshment when driving back, usually in a hansom from the brigade headquarters in the City. To call at an hotel was considered irregular, but the problem was solved by the Prince remembering a remarkable and amiable cigar-merchant in Rupert Street whom he had patronized, and it was arranged that the cigar-merchant should have refreshments ready when required for the Prince and his gentleman. So here in this quiet back room, with the sage tobacconist standing by, the Prince and his escort

would talk over their adventures of the night while the London night-life of that romantic time roared along Coventry Street. Stevenson probably knew the shop and heard of the Prince's visits, and he took them both into his fantasy. The shop remained little altered till last year, when its business was taken to a street near by, and the divan that was hallowed by Habana smoke from royal lips is now a woman's hat-shop.

Near it was another romantic Soho shop in Coventry Street, also in age under the qualifying period, but a real delight to any true London perambulator. It seemed the very expression of English treasure-trove, a perfect period piece with no alterations since it was founded in 1808. It had square projecting windows with small panes of crown glass, and a fine piece of lettering over its whole fascia:

'LAMBERT, GOLDSMITHS AND SILVERSMITHS
TO THEIR MAJESTIES AND THE DUCHESS OF KENT.'

A century had slipped by and Lambert's seemed not to have noticed that the Duchess of Kent no more drove to their door in her high-springed carriage, and that George III and his queen had passed away. The long reign of Queen Victoria must have escaped the attention of Lambert's, for there were no 'Their Majesties' between the reign of William IV and the coronation of King Edward. Possibly Lambert's then thought that things would work out just as well with the Duchess of Kent part, and at one time that dukedom of Kent seemed likely to be revived – but the time is not yet.

Mention must be added here of the sign over Burgess's old sauce-shop, a deep aromatic grotto that used to delight the eyes

and noses of passengers in the Strand. Burgess's sign in nice lettering proclaimed that he was

'PURVEYOR TO H.R.H. THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER.'

Some interfering person in 1905 drew attention in the Press to the demise of that lamented princess. Burgess thereupon altered his sign to read:

'PURVEYOR TO H. *late* R.H. THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER.'

This would not do either, for you could not purvey to a late anybody. This also was pointed out, and for that or other reasons Burgess decided to leave the Strand (they once had behind their shop a quay of their own on the river for schooners with limes and oil), which was obviously too near the pernickety people of Fleet Street.

Lambert's, as I said, also went west. It was a sad day to the head of the firm, who, like his father and granddaughter, had been born over the shop. They are like most of the Soho tradesmen, descended from an old Huguenot family. One misses the rich, glowing masses of old gold and silver vessels – chalices, goblets, table-ships, racing cups, bells, salvers, and chased coral-and-bells for princely babies. It all gave an extraordinary impression of richness and grandeur, almost at your hand, which helped to keep alive the old legend of London being – well, if not exactly paved, lined with gold and silver. Sometimes on foggy nights the little projecting square windows, crammed with treasure, looked like ships (anybody's ships) that had come home. It looked just like that when our Waterloo soldiers came home and wandered up and down Coventry Street, and some

of our men when they came back from the Somme must have missed it on their way to say farewell to Piccadilly or to Leicester Square.

Weddowson & Veal's, which kept in a case in the front shop in the Strand an Admiral's hat that Nelson had left for a clasp repair, before he put off hurriedly to sea and never returned, and Chapple and Mantell, other old silversmiths of the Strand, who had made family plate for generations, have gone west to Bond Street; and so, too, has Strong i' th' arm – whose name alone was better than a discount – in Pall Mall, which specialized in portraits of the heads of favourite dogs set within crystals and ultramarines and mounted as tie-pins or brooches for hunting squires and their daughters. Garrards, in Albemarle Street, were founded in 1721, and ever since they have been making plate and wedding presents and silver buttons and setting the jewels of the great. The queerest entries in their ledgers is a purchase by Sir Robert Walpole of seventy-two mourning rings as mementoes, and two gold toothpicks for Queen Charlotte. Garrards recut the Koh-i-noor diamond in 1851, and the Cullinan diamond for Queen Mary, and they reset the Imperial crown for King George's coronation. Among the sporting cups they made is the America Cup which Lord Anglesey presented to the Royal Yacht Squadron and America captured in 1851 and still retains.

You can have your hair cut in a shop in the Royal Arcade that has had a continuous existence since the Cavaliers had their curls trimmed by the founder. You can buy to-day a properly stocked seaman's medicine chest in a handsome old druggist's in the Minories where Smollett's heroes could have bought their

medicine chests on the way to their ship. Indian rajahs still buy cockspurs for their cock-fighting at a shop off Cockspur Street, and the East End has at least one house where you can buy flints for flintlock guns and pistols, and you can buy binoculars from a City shop at which Nelson bought his and as he stood at the door tried them on the cross of St. Paul's.

My friend with the passion for permanence in his shops rejoiced especially in grocers, and his rarest joy was the discovery that there is one City grocer that has had an account with the London Hospital since 1754, continued without a break. A firm of druggists, still drugging, opened a free medicine stall in the Spital Market during the Plague of London in 1665. The descendants of the publisher of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* still carry on business in Charterhouse Square. London has scores of taverns that have quenched London thirst since the Great Fire. One London tavern still has the old coffee-pots hung from its roof to show its descent from a Queen Anne coffee-house. But I shall leave taverns out of this chapter. They have been too carefully and affectionately dealt with in Mr. Wagner's and other works. Suffice it is to say that my friend had no difficulty in slaking his thirst in qualified taverns. But his joy was rather, as I have said, in the grocer's shop. He loved that marvellously preserved old double-windowed grocery in Artillery Row, which still keeps its state in that squalid neighbourhood, with the grocer still living above his shop in his Queen Anne panelled rooms, although the East End in its most alien form has oozed over the whole quarter where the old customers lived and 'Peter the Painter,' that romantic partisan, conducted one of his adventures a street away. He was devoted to the

great shop in Piccadilly, which had provided hampers for the Derby ever since that institution was founded.

But the time to see this shop collector at his best was when a shop was first flowering into the decreed antiquity that justified its consideration as a shop. I remember especially a small grocery shop that had survived miraculously enough in a court off Leadenhall Street. Banks and insurance offices towered up around, and the only other domestic link with the City's past was in the adjoining court, an ancient chop-house believed to be the last in London to give up the use of pewter plates. It seemed as unlikely there as a child's bassinette or a collie dog. On certain days in that deep court, where the light filters down from projection to projection, it is like a ghost of a little shop that once was there in the homely era of the City. But it is real enough, and so is the proprietor, a sensible man with no illusions, who sells all sorts of things from pickled cucumber and tumblers for parties on Lord Mayor's Show day to smuggled cigars. Of course, the cigars came lawfully enough to him; he buys them at the sales by order of H.M. Customs of tobacco seized from the contrabandists, but if you look into it you'll find most of his wares have a curious and interesting tag. Great bankers and walk-clerks and office-boys are among his customers, and he must hear a good deal about what is doing in the world of finance. The legend on the shop reads:

'Established in 1723.'

My friend could not discover the day and the month, so he had perforce to wait till the year had ended. Then with eagerness he repaired to the little shop, wished the shopman good

day, tried a scrubbing-brush, bought a bottle of gherkins and a smuggled cigar, and discussed the price of apples. He had not been so happy since one of Twining's shopmen told him that when he was young he was allowed to go down below to test teas on his birthday.

II

In the social history of our times the tea-shop has been strangely neglected, yet as a rendezvous of both sexes its function is much more important in modern life than the much-bewritten tavern. It began in the memory of middle-aged people, and its pedigree can be traced and certified. There was an Aerated Bread Company shop near London Bridge Station, served by an elderly lady of a kindly nature who once shared her own pot of tea in her back shop with one or two favourite customers. The lady's name is not known nor the names of the customers who shared that historic meal. Anyway, it was a success, and she made a habit of giving tea to selected customers. One day she suggested to the company that they might make the serving of tea part of their trade. That was in 1884. The company thought the idea worth a trial – up to that time they dealt only in bread and cakes – and so the tea-shop as we know it began. Pearce and Plenty's shops followed for a poorer class of Londoner, and Robert Lockhart at the time of the Moody and Sankey crusade opened shops at Liverpool and afterwards in London, first for cocoa and latterly also for tea, all in the cause of temperance. The Express Dairy Company began with milk, and it, too, came to tea, and Slaters, and then the great Lyons, came on the scene, and the pioneer A.B.C. found itself in a

world of tea-shops. Of course, there were before that a few isolated pastrycooks with customers of a richer class and hotels that served tea when required, but the London tea-shop as an institution was founded by the A.B.C. I like the A.B.C. shop, although I will admit that it has shortcomings. There is something domestic and Victorian about it, an air of plain fare and no nonsense, and food that might do you a power of good.

The London tea-shop, when you come to think of it, fills a very big part in the Londoner's life. It is democratic in a sense that the tavern never was in the mixture of classes that you see therein seated together drinking and eating the same things. You may touch chairs with a peer – the late Duke of Norfolk was partial to a tea-shop in Parliament Street, and the late Marquis of Salisbury, even when Premier, is said to have frequented them – or a millionaire, or a great artist or writer or soldier, or a great man's valet, or a policeman in plain clothes, or your barber or milkman, or a notable criminal. The inclusive character of the tea-shop came out very curiously in the trial of the thieves some twelve years ago who stole what the newspapers called 'The Great Pearl Necklace.' It was shown in the trial that the chief pearls were passed from the one gang to the other in this way. A man went to the smoking-room of a tea-shop in Holborn, sat at a table and, producing a cigar, felt his pocket for matches, and, not finding any, turned to a man at the next table and asked for a match. The other man tossed a box over and told him to keep it. The first man lit his cigar and put the match-box in his pocket. It contained the pearls. Acquaintances are made, even friendships formed, in tea-shops, but not often, for decorum is carried on to the most English

degree within their walls. Romance, of course, can no more be kept out of tea-shops than out of a department stores, but it is on sufferance. Business, too, must not be overdone, and pencil figures on the marble-topped tables are discouraged. Nobody breaks into song as they do sometimes in public-houses, nor are there outward quarrellings or debate, and rarely laughter. Its function is very different from the foreign cafés where men sit in groups and others arrive and join in endless discussion far into the night. Relaxation is the note of the tavern and the café. The tea-shop (with the males, at any rate) seems like one of the duller parts of daily routine. Meredith's Rajah wrote of the English having the look of a people begotten in business hours. He may have studied them taking their pleasure in a tea-shop.

The old-fashioned pastrycook's shop that sometimes sold tea fulfilled a different rôle, was individualist in character and purveyed for one class. It was rather like an old sailing ship owned by the master mariner and no more fit to deal with the pressure of modern crowds and business than the barque or brig was able to compete with the standardized liner. The most individual of all the pastrycooks I have known was B——'s, a sedate shop in a by-street off Regent Street, that closed its doors about the end of the War. There was nothing particular about it except that the shop and its manager had character, which its modern rivals have not. It had been seventy years there, the proprietor had worked for fifty years in the business and lived above his shop. When he began business the nearest pastrycook to the north was near the Queen's Hall, and the nearest to the south was in Trafalgar Square. Downstairs, the place looked like a baker's shop, with all sorts of special biscuits of its own,

and a dozen tables where a special class of customers – usually comfortable ladies from the far suburbs, and the heads of the old-fashioned shops behind Regent Street – took tea. It was probably the last place in London where a lady's sealskin bag could be seen. Upstairs was a very good restaurant, where almost the same people had lunched for years and years.

On the staircase, in a little gold frame, there was a letter from one of these customers. It said: 'Kindly send me one of your bills of fare – an old one will do. I want to see what variety you have. I have eaten 5,500 of your steaks in the last thirty-five years, and I think I would like a change.' What other restaurant than B——'s would have had the humour and modesty to have given that letter a place of honour? It was the key-note of the shop. Prices had gone up since the War, but B——'s refused to change a figure. It was a fully licensed place, and might have made a good deal of money by exploiting that side, but although tired ladies might come in for a glass of port and a biscuit, nobody ever attempted to order whisky. It was known that Mr. B. wouldn't like it.

On the last day the old proprietor and his assistants said good-bye to their old clients. There were no notices outside the shop, no fuss, no claim for licence compensation. B——'s have gone out of London life decorously and with honour, and when the assistants were asked by their customers, 'Where can we go to now – where can we get a sort of place like this?' the assistants spoke the truth when they said that they were afraid there was no place like B——'s in London.

Another fine old pastrycook was in High Street, Kensington, where, if anywhere, pastrycooks should flourish. It was 'sold

off' a few years ago – another War casualty. The glass discs with the bevelled edge bearing in faded gilt 'Routs supplied,' the old 'property' birthday cakes in the shape of mills with practicable wheels, the slightly battered tall biscuit caskets with 'Abernethy' and 'Wine' in a kind of Chinese lettering on a centre panel, the decanters with silver labels attached round their handsome necks with silver chains, the short, portly silver-gilt teapots, and all the nice well-flavoured old things that suggested Kensington well-to-do-ness – even 'county folk' might have supped a jelly there – all, all had gone. But there was a point about this shop much more interesting to remember. One day waiting on tea, which always arrived here hot but leisurely, I took up an old morocco-bound volume, and found that it was full of testimonials to a former proprietor of the shop. The letters mostly began 'Lieutenant-Colonel Beckswith-Jones presents his compliments and has pleasure in saying that everything on the evening of the 5th was done to his utmost satisfaction, and that he encloses cheque.' Some of them were apologies for the delay in sending cheque for purveying on the occasion of the marriage 'as Mr. Hussey-Hussey-Thornton has been in India and only recently returned.' The important point came out in the more personal ones, which began 'Dear Mr. Pan.' Now, Sir James Barrie, who lived near, must have known this shop in Mr. Pan's time, and here clearly, I think, we have 'Peter Pan's' father. And who could have a more suitable father than a Kensington pastrycook?

The delectable art of the pastrycook and the confectioner has died out because we are not worthy of it. There is no place for it in an age of cocktails and universal smoking. That great

social authority, the late G. W. E. Russell, said that in his father's day the officers on duty at the Horse Guards, after they had been strapped and trussed into their tight and wonderful uniforms, were not supposed even to walk about in them, there being a belief that even a few steps ruined the set of something or other. The theory then was that it was best for an officer in full uniform to sit down. He remembered his father describing a friend of his in the Blues sitting in a window in the Horse Guards in Whitehall, his arm leaning on a special kind of cushion they had there which opened outwards over the window so that the whole sleeve was protected; well, Mr. Russell's father saw the friend in the Blues sitting in this way on duty eating jellies! The thing would be impossible to-day.

And it was not only the soldiers. In those days all young men took an intelligent interest in confectionery. This taste lasted up till near the end of last century. The young man went to Grange's in Piccadilly for dainties and to Gunter's in Berkeley Square for ices. And he went alone for these indulgences, he was not entertaining ladies. Mr. Russell admitted that these doings must seem vastly entertaining to the young man of to-day with (as he put it) the odour of stale tobacco in his clothes and ridiculous pieces of papered tobacco in his mouth, but he pointed out that it was tobacco that killed this early love just as it was tobacco that was killing our taste in wine and in all delicate food. And if the present generation was taking to the simple life and the simple food, there was surely no reason for them to make a fuss about it. They of the leather palate knew no better. Mr. Russell did not live to see every second

woman smoking. With that his last hopes for our dainty feeding would have gone.

But before leaving this subject, Birch's of Cornhill must have its niche. Like the Haymarket snuff-shop, its very existence in these times is a wonder; all the chances of change and economics were against survival. Yet here it is, the shop too cramped to accommodate more than eight shipping magnates or stock-brokers, with (say) six more being served over their shoulders, balancing their plates and glasses as they may. It is a little green shop of George III's date, with three round-headed windows and a round-headed door just large enough for a Lord Mayor, but hardly wide enough for his coachman, the woodwork all carved with innocent Renaissance decorations. A plain wooden floor and narrow oak counter worn by generations of scrubbers, a small plain settee of Chippendale period, are the only furniture, but in the national convention of separating Englishmen whenever possible, there is a sort of open screen of an earlier period dividing the little place in two. The open beams under the ceiling have been hewn by the adze. In this little low-roofed bower you may see the soundest and stoutest men on the London 'Change standing and eating a special three-decked jam sandwich and drinking sherry or whisky-jelly or coffee, while upstairs turtle soup and oysters at surprising prices are being consumed. One of the happiest touches about the shop is the funny little wedding-cake ornaments set near the small panes in the narrow windows – wedding cakes in Cornhill! There's a City idyll for you. Another is a little royal crown in a case. I used to believe that it was Queen Victoria's crown, mislaid when she was opening the new Royal Exchange over

the way and put there in case she came back for it. It was not so, but it had to do with the ceremony, being used as a symbol in the decorations.

Yes, every one must have wished at times that he or she had a shop of his or her own. It will be a duller existence when all the world is a capitalist or co-operative stores.

THE STREET OF THE GIANT GOOSEBERRY

I

NOBODY IS IMPRESSED BY FLEET STREET. IT IS SO SHORT and undistinguished a thoroughfare that if you are on a bus or a motor-car you may pass through it without knowing. Its salient feature is the mass of lettering outside its offices as though some one had been trying alphabets of different sizes on the street front. Wren's noble gateway to the Middle Temple, the building at the entrance to the Inner Temple, Hoare's Bank, designed by Smirke, the Cock Tavern with its mock Tudor front, the *Daily Telegraph's* dull but important mass with its projecting clock, St. Dunstan's Church with its open belfry that entraps the sunset so happily, and the glimpse you get of Wren's St. Bride's with its delightful diminishing stages, are the main things of the street. There is only one big London newspaper published in Fleet Street; the other papers crouch in the narrow streets that run down to the Embankment, where the motors and cyclists can get away quickly, or to the north, where they have wide Holborn for their racing track. Banks and insurance offices are all over the street. But the tattooing on the buildings does stand for something. You can trace the names of newspapers from Shanghai to Saskatchewan, from Cape Town to Riga, from Melbourne to Baltimore. Some represent spiritual geography – *The Church Worker*, *The Methodist Recorder*, *The Catholic Herald*, *The Flying Roll*. Then, the birds and animals seem to have their interests consolidated in and about Fleet Street: *The Racehorse*, *The Poultry World*, *The Beekeeper*; and the trade journals: *The Licensed Victuallers' Review*, *The Baker*, *Automobile Engineer*, and so on. It is fascinating, it is dumb-

foundering to study all the names on the house fronts and on the boards at the foot of the narrow stairs. All interests seem concentrated here. What could not happen if Fleet Street one fine day spoke to the whole world in one voice with one message?

Several peers, their wealth and title coming from their papers, decorate its roadway every day. Millions have been made by proprietors of journals and large fortunes lost by others. It dictates to Parliament, to the Church, to the people, and sometimes its dictation synchronizes with what comes to pass. The greatest generals and admirals quail before it. The Throne is not unmoved by its praise. It can make wars, though it cannot make peace. In short, it's capable of almost anything. Yet, as I have said, Fleet Street is a short, shabby street, and, for all its lettering is curiously anonymous, like its denizens. Taverns, cook-shops, tea-shops, tobacconists, cheap tailors, chemists, tourist agents, stationers, bag-shops, one post office and one book-shop make up its shops. It is the only street in the City with a night population. The ugliest monument in London streets greets you as you enter it; its southern streets are narrow sloping alleys, only one of them revealing the river; its two little northern tributaries are ludicrous. No, Fleet Street is not impressive. Yet to thousands of youths just come to Fleet Street with a beating heart it is as Yarrow to Wordsworth:

> 'And this is Yarrow,
> This the place my fancy oft hath haunted.'

How the young men flood in from the east, west, south, and north – particularly from the north – 'so many and so many

with such glee' – how fast the stream runs, how quickly the faces change, yet how many seem to have been always there! Here fortune, fame, and power sit and have been seized by penniless men who came up just as they did, fortune and power so vast that in the end they challenged reason itself. The history of the street is full of stories as unlikely as fairy-tales. Here Delane, who found himself at twenty-three editor of *The Times*, rode from his house in Serjeants' Inn to warn, counsel, and command the Great in Whitehall; here famous editors, leader-writers, war-correspondents, special correspondents, and the flower of two centuries of journalism have pulled down and set up governments, worked for privilege or reform, denounced the good or the wicked, raised panics and unveiled the truth.

'Look at that, Pen,' Warrington said. 'There she is – the great engine – she never sleeps. She has her ambassador in every quarter of the world, her courier upon every road. Her officers march along with armies and her envoys walk into statesmen's cabinets. They are ubiquitous. Yonder journal has an agent, at this moment, giving bribes at Madrid; and another inspecting the price of potatoes in Covent Garden. Look! here comes the Foreign Express galloping in. They will be able to give news to Downing Street to-morrow: funds will rise or fall, fortunes will be made or lost. Lord B. will get up and, holding the paper in his hand and seeing the noble Marquis in his place, will make a great speech; and – and Mr. Doolan will be called away from his supper at the Back Kitchen, for he is foreign sub-editor, and sees the mail in the newspaper sheet before he goes to his own.'

And the Press has not changed in essentials since Thackeray

wrote that enthralling passage, except that the foreign news may come by wireless and there is now no Back Kitchen. The street itself does not resound to the printing press – that terrific pulse of the news that once heard by a youth in his first newspaper is never forgotten till his own pulse runs down.

It is heard in the regions on the north and south of Fleet Street. In the hinterland on the north lies an amazing mass of courts, alleys, and passages, unchanged in plan, and in some cases in the buildings themselves, since the Great Fire, and there the printing trade has its lairs and every other man is a typesetter or printer or concerned in printing, and in the heart of it is the house where Samuel Johnson compiled his dictionary, and near in a rambling old congeries with an old-fashioned lion and unicorn in gilt and metal over the outer gate, Blue Books are born. There is one general printer thereabouts who prints the most unlikely assortment of weekly journals – religious (five denominations), political, ethical, advertising, boxing, racing, and housewifery. One teases oneself with the thought what might happen some week-end if one of the staff were left a fortune and in a general celebration the *copy* got mixed. The press clicks, pants, and thunders in this region as though it were doing a lot of good in the world. In one aged structure with a rich ceiling, ascribed to Wren, there is in an attic cage of small-paned glass windows, a long composing-room where elderly compositors still set by hand and take their pinch of snuff to clear the case-dust from their nostrils as they work on *The Philosophical Magazine*. There are even hand-presses here just as they were a hundred years ago when *The Philosophical Magazine* was young. It must be a favourite haunt to the shade

of old Wynkyn de Worde, whose own press was near by in the shelter of St. Dunstan's Church. He would have much in common with the grey respectable old compositors in that learned and mysterious old William and Mary house behind its high wall and palisadoes with a sort of drawbridge before its door.

The distribution men with their motor-vans and motor-cycles and push-cycles and the newsboys who can snatch a penny and leave a paper in your hand with a single expert motion, are apparent enough, day and night, in Fleet Street, but the multitude of compositors, *readers*, stereotypers, and machine men rarely betray their existence to the public. It takes the Lord Mayor's Show or something even more spectacular than that to bring them buzzing out of their fastnesses. Only once have I seen the muscular oil-browned men in overalls swarm into Fleet Street, and that was the night when the first Zeppelin arrived over London. The searchlights caught it fair as it turned north. 'God,' cried one of them, 'see it going up Fetter Lane!'

II

Meredith speaks of dark moments in life when as you walk along Pall Mall it seems to rain black balls. There are moments known to every denizen when Fleet Street seems to begin with the Sea Serpent and end with the Giant Gooseberry. Common sense tells you that it is the Griffin at Temple Bar and the dome of St. Paul's in the east, but there are times when the writ of common sense does not run in Fleet Street. There are times when Fleet Street can magnify the visit of a kinema prodigy

into an international event and can minify London into a village. It cannot yet make all people think alike, but it can make them think about a like subject. There are moments when it seems sensible enough for the newsboys to refuse to distinguish between one evening paper and another, crying them all with the general name of 'Winner.' You can appreciate the point of view of that Fleet Street man, back from his holidays, who said, 'I've been completely out of things – I don't even know what murder we're at!' Fleet Street's favourite and cruellest jest is the creation of the Temporary Important – a jest that the victim never apprehends but is soon made to feel. It is never tired of treating London as a village pretending that some unimportant event is engrossing the mind of millions, ordering the lieges to crane their minds towards *The Man on the Roof* or *The Fat Boy of Peckham's Bicycle*.

Fleet Street itself at times – on weekdays in August with trains of country and American tourists; on Sundays with hurrying church-goers – assumes a look of the avenue to the Cathedral, the *Via del Duomo* of London, that is disturbing to its children; but at most times it has to them something of a village look that shines clear through its hurrying stream of motor-buses and bands of strangers. I have seen it on a sunny Saturday afternoon, when old Mr. Bond the chemist, after a busy morning syringing pressmen's ears (for the House was reassembling on Monday), coming to his door for a breath of air and seeing old Mr. Madford, the tobacconist across the way, standing at his door, gave a grave wave of the hand. The motor traffic roared between, so they couldn't pass the time of day, but the tobacconist pointed in a sly way to the chemist's cat, which

was sitting snugly at the cook-shop next door. There were two brothers in the old tobacco-shop and two brothers at the chemist's. They have other ties. The policeman can tell you usually if Captain Shannon has gone home or if Mr. Pendennis has crossed over to the Temple. The kerb people know you and tell you that the old party what you gave the overcoat to 'ad a fit at the Rowton last night and at the correct time ask if you had a nice holiday. The Bank of England chief official lived over the Bank, and once there was a baby there. Every one knew the Bank of England Baby. Her passage in her baby-carriage across Fleet Street to the Temple entrance (Bank of England babies have an ancient right to sun in the Temple Gardens) was a village event, viewed with great sympathy by every one, especially the kerb-folk.

There is no village pump – although there is a Pump Court – in the Fleet Street village, but never was there such a place for gossip, where people know other people's business better than their own, where rumour is quicker than wireless. When a Fleet Street worthy is getting a title even the news-sellers seem to know, and when a paper is changing hands conferences are going on about it in the compositors' taverns as well as in the Press Club. The turnip blight, the potato disease, the boll weevil of Fleet Street is amalgamation. At that terrible word the stoutest leader-writer turns pale, art critics see red, and dramatic critics see lawyers. All Fleet Street, whether its cabbage-patch be Tory, Liberal, or Labour, come together at these junctures and sympathize and scheme for the benefit of the stricken men. Every one is known by headmark and often by nickname in Fleet Street, and a great deal is known. Sir James

Barrie has only once visited a Fleet Street office, I believe, but if he spent a week or two there he would see its resemblance to Thrums.

There are other strange aspects of this enthralling street that most of us never notice because it is 'not in the news.' The great vegetable wagons laden with hundreds of cabbages or cauliflowers or lettuces move along the glossy surface of Fleet Street in the summer dawn, the lantern burning yellow, the wagoner half asleep and his companion snoring, just as they trundled along the cobbles of Fleet Street and steered through the old Temple Bar. Mostly it is motor traffic now, but the vegetables don't change. 'Tis very pleasant on a summer morning when work is ended looking over a Fleet Street balcony as the wagons with their bright vegetables go by. They leave sometimes more than their scent of vegetables, for Fleet Street has more butterflies and moths than any other region except Covent Garden. Sheep sometimes pass through in the early morning on their way from Kent over Blackfriars Bridge to Islington Market. There is a local story of a Fleet Street man surprised by such a happening, who could not help exclaiming, 'What an extraordinary thing to see in the heart of the greatest city in the world' – he was a leader-writer – 'a pastoral spectacle like this!' A Figure of the Night who had drifted beside him said, 'Yes, guv'nor; would you like to buy a gold vatch?' It is an absurd story, but somehow with the flock of sheep, the leader-writer, and the pickpocket getting home in the dawn to the East End, it has a lot of Fleet Street in it. Old pressmen hold that there is nothing like a walk in the morning hours just after dawn between Chancery Lane and Ludgate Circus in spring

ST. PAUL'S OVER AMEN CORNER

and summer, and even in autumn. One veteran Scot used to declare that there was a breeze broke round St. Paul's at that hour just as it breaks on Ben Lomond, and he had many a time, whilst approaching St. Paul's, been reminded of a breeze from a Highland loch. And there is a good deal in the belief that Fleet Street air in the early morning is fresher than other London air, for there being no domestic fires in the City and the offices closing before six, the morning finds it clearer of smoke than any other London quarter.

Then, even in these times there comes the clop-clop, clip-clop of great horses in the night, and you look out of your window and see a dark shining carriage with its candle-lamps burning, a giant coachman and footman in fawn coats and tall hats on the seat, and perhaps a glimpse of a uniformed figure or two in the interior. You see the armorial crest on the door, the stately Georgian harness on the great horses with touches of red in the leather. It is one of the Lord Mayor's carriages taking a guest home from a Guildhall or City company dinner. Look well at these tall horses, for they and the few teams in the royal stables are now the last of the kind left in London. In the night in Fleet Street this spectacle of old London pride, quiet and stately, among the vegetable wagons and newspaper vans, looks somehow like the squire's carriage going through the village. It always impresses me more sharply than the Lord Mayor's Show itself, for it never fails to come as a surprise, and seems to hint a secret habitual life of the City that goes on silently when Business has gone home and lights spring up in the ancient City companies' halls and strange ceremonies and archaic costumes begin to move again, and maybe the dim old

portraits on these worshipful walls come to life. The Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks, for instance, who convene in a little old hall in Silver Street and dine round a large, queer table shaped like a bass viol, and probably sing glees and catches together in the heart of the deserted quarter where Manchester goodsmen bargain and deal and crowd through the day, must be a piece of a dream by Charles Lamb that has somehow taken corporal existence.

But thoughts like these make Fleet Street only a thoroughfare, not a place. To the public it is indeed a place, a place that grows peerages like runner beans and makes and loses fortunes, buys and sells reputations and makes the world dance to the queer tunes of its medicine men: a sort of magic village with tom-toms beating every morning. But that is, of course, not all there is to say about Fleet Street; a puzzling place, however you like to take it, with nothing spectacular to show for its power and wealth, or for its great deeds done and the rare hearts that have worked in its service and great causes it has served (few memorials for its heroes in its village church of St. Bride's); Fleet Street is a mystery speaking with the tongues of men and, at moments, of angels.

Even the kinema people could make nothing of our vague, shabby Fleet Street, and had to prepare and 'feature' their own effects – Fleet Street which could give three headlines to anything in a minute had no headline for itself. It was so blank, so insignificant that the kinema kings had to invent a Fleet Street of their own. Once, soon after midnight, there descended a fleet of big motor-wagons surmounted by enormous searchlights on straddling legs frizzy with tubes. They were accom-

panied by other cars with strange-looking men and big film cameras. About one o'clock the fun began. Four great moons were turned on Fleet Street, and the cameras hummed while the news-carts came thundering out from the printing offices. 'Play on the clock – play on the clock!' roared the stage-manager. It was important to have the time right. Long strings of press-agency and cable-company boys came hurrying along on bicycles, and newsmen with news-bills sallied out from unexpected places.

As some of the news-vans came along young kinema men in plain clothes jumped on to the footboard with a paper in their hand pointing out the significant thing in the leader to the gruff, unresponsive driver. This was presumably to represent young journalists in their enthusiasm going to uncontrollable lengths. A char-a-banc full of men in evening dress came along – presumably theatrical critics returning to their offices after a first night. Large, expensive cars, with ladies in shiny dresses turning wondering eyes on the great newspaper offices, edged gently through the crush.

The street was cleared a little while four important-looking stout gentlemen, presumably editors and chief sub-editors, marched importantly out of an office across the street, supers making way for them. But at a shout from the stage-manager that it wouldn't do they scurried back again to their entry and came again as important editors and chief sub-editors.

These were only a few of the wonders that were recorded that night so that the world might know something about its chief informant. But one thing sticks. Like every other journalist, I had writhed over that line in Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*

where he described Prince Florizel's companion as 'painted and disguised to represent a gentleman connected with the Press.' That night I saw that gentleman.

As an epilogue to this chapter let me mention a Fleet Street scene which I saw in my early London experience and always expected to see again as an epilogue on the stage. It was in the old Press Club. Two friends were sitting together over their beer in the late afternoon. One was rather showily dressed wearing a morning coat with white slip and a moss-rose bud in his buttonhole; his friend was a tired-looking man with baggy pockets who seemed as though he sat most of his life. The first was the reporter of a fashionable daily who described weddings; the other an agency sub-editor who handled the law reports, mainly divorce reports. The two were great friends, and their talk usually turned on their work. The sub-editor would speak of the divorce case he had been working on that day and the reporter would often be able to recall the marriage, with details of guests, clergymen, dresses and presents, and the scene at St. George's, Hanover Square, or St. Mary Abbot's, Kensington. The sub-editor on his side would mention the co-respondent, the private detectives, the counsel, the judge, the jury, and incidents of the case. Then they would talk probably about the bright new wedding that the reporter had attended that day. And the sub-editor meditatively would sharpen his blue pencil.

NORTH O' EUSTON

IN MODERN LIFE THE GREAT RAILWAY STATIONS ARE THE City gates. Here are gathered much of the sadness and misery, the joy and fulfilment of existence, the suspense and hopes and hates and loves that the eye confesses at last as the train steams out or in. Strangers from afar are welcomed face to face; men on adventurous errands go out as through sally-ports (what a sally-port to eternity was Victoria Station from 1914 to 1918!); the handkerchief waves for an instant, but that is the only pennon, and we do not see them grow to pigmies as they troop over the plain. At these gates of the modern city people arrive and depart at full stature. The Great arrive in their noiseless trains; a carriage door opens and there, large as life, stands a king or the head of a Republic; the band plays its eight bars of music while the Great shake hands with the Great and the military guard stiffens for inspection. Five minutes later and it is all over and the station is on the move again and ordinary passengers are swarming into their trains. It is all so sudden, so life-size, so soon over that it seems as unreal as the white-painted coal on the tender of the State train. And to the sensitive onlooker this air of unreality touches all the station happenings: the meetings looked forward to so eagerly by flaming hearts, the farewells of the old with the young, the last words said. In a few minutes the platform is empty but for a few porters and old ladies asking about trains. If the scenes of strong human emotions were really haunted by the shades of the actors, what dense assemblies there would be on every railway platform!

Some emanation of the tragic, or at least of the sinister side of the drama of coming and going, hangs about the neighbourhood

of the great railway termini. It is potently present round Waterloo with its shabby confusion of railway arches and rows of dark little houses lying in ambush in its intricacies, its second-rate music-hall rendezvous, and a peculiar South London blight near the river suggesting wharfland. It is present in a particularly romantic form at Fenchurch Street Station – in a shop at the corner you can buy 'Malay Self-Taught' – that half-secret station tucked away from any thoroughfare, with a little lagoon of a yard before its dingy front, where some days no cab can penetrate because of the bodies of shivering lascars waiting silently with their belongings for the order to mount the stairs and take train to their ships at Tilbury. Fenchurch Street Station's dark roof resounds less than it did to the final bitternesses of sailors and their women, but there are still more voices raised in anger here than in other London stations. At night, when the City shops are shuttered and the streets deserted, this station sometimes splutters with life and song and oaths and sailormen's cries. But the emanation thickens to a cloud in the region behind the three great termini in Euston Road, that may be called, for convenience' sake, North o' Euston.

King's Cross lurks within a sort of stableyard, its campanile with the clock, too, having a domestic look, like the feature of a stable of a great house. It seems the right place for the Flying Scotsman to bear away in reserved compartments carefully selected people on the 11th of August. St. Pancras is like a cathedral to an unknown saint – called St. Pancras for the moment – raising the whole skyline of the north with Gothic outlines and its nobly spanned interior, whose great height reduces trains and people to something like performing mice

in a cage. But best of all as a work of imagination is Euston, with its tremendous granite Doric portal, by which Hardwick recognized Euston as London's Gate. How the lights of London sparkled in the old days as one drove through it in one's first London hansom! How its shadow fell as one drove back! What a setting was the gigantic portal to the dreams of young men who had come to London to seek their fortune!

But the region round Euston does not suggest the young man seeking his fortune at all. All great railway stations surround themselves with a sort of debatable land that is neither residential, commercial, industrial, trading, nor theatrical. It has shabby hotels and makeshift lodgings, bawdy houses, pawnbrokers' shops, second-hand dealers in all sorts of articles from muddy mock-ermine furs to rings of rusty keys. A strange temporary look hangs about the place as though the denizens were always packing up, many of them moving on, and moving on too quickly to pack up, and the place was organized for immediate disposal of their goods. The only touch of new paint is where a new pseudonym has been lettered on the front of a shabby hotel. A strange sort of conflict seems to be waging all the time up and down these streets with routs and forays as though London was defending itself against these adventurers and trying to drive them back into the stations and away, and the needy folk were making a last stand.

Another fancy one has in North o' Euston is of strangers who sought London not as a land to conquer but as an asylum. Police reports show that every year a large number of the petty criminals, fraudulent tradesmen, shopmen who have falsified

books, and clerks who have embezzled, and all sorts of criminals through weakness flee to London to escape justice, and many who have taken their punishment to escape further shame. Do many of them when they come out of their station and see the rush and turmoil and spacious, incoherent metropolitanism of Euston Road recoil abashed, settle down in the hinterland of the stations, marry and breed furtive little children in these furtive streets? Doubtless the people North o' Euston are as honest as people elsewhere, but that is the effect of much observation and cogitation there. It is a queer region, with a population that moves much at night, and its streets of two-story houses with forlorn gardens with broken iron railings and secret-looking tiny squares and courts entered through archways containing a hamlet with higgledy-piggledy tiny gardens with washings hung out to dry and oversized public-houses. Even the dead do not belong to the district, but came there by chance, for the obscure graveyard of St. James's that is so hard to find is packed with bodies that were carted up half a century ago from St. James's Churchyard, Piccadilly, when their lairs were wanted for a new restaurant. Their tombstones, incommoded and alien, are ranged round the walls, depreciating this unfashionable site for Piccadilly tombstones. I wonder if any of the broken men of the region who eat their luncheons here in the summer have a fellow-feeling for these tombstones. 'Gentleman' is the description cut on many.

The most furtive, and in its way the most sinister, spirit of the region resides, I think, in a dingy crescent with a shallow convex curve and a distant echo of gentility in its arched windows and faint glimmer that tells of stucco beneath its grime.

NORTH O' EUSTON

Its small houses are divided and subdivided among many tenants, but it is curiously quiet at night, with naked lights here and there behind curtainless windows. It is an uncanny experience to strike this crescent in a winter's dawn when killing time waiting on an overdue train at the station. I remember well striking the place on one such aimless itinerary. The crescent seemed to curve endlessly on and on in its shabby symmetry, each number looking more mysterious and sinister than the last with the dawn and the gas-light discovering its discoloured face. Suddenly behind me I heard shambling footsteps. I looked back, but by the curve of the crescent could see no one, and as I went on with the steps of the unseen figure getting closer and closer, it was like an ugly dream that would never end. In this mood, with the mind seeking for something tangible to give substance to my obsession of the night, my thoughts fastened on a gigantic demi-jar over the fascia of a shabby shop that had once been a drysalter's. It seemed a symbol of the mystery and abominable menace one sensed in the locality as though the genie of the region waited on the appointed day to be unsealed and discharge his malignity against the honour of the City. In the morning I had forgotten it all, but the vision came back again this summer when the inquest was held on the body of a famous man of learning full of years and honours, who, arriving in London one night for a family wedding, dined at a railway hotel, strolled out for an hour into these streets and met shame and death; a great light in the world of knowledge went out in guttering smoke. It was this and other disasters to honour rather than the Camden Town Murder with its relation to the railway stations and the night-life around

them that seemed to express the measure of dingy horror that lurks in the region.

And what fiction-writer would be bold enough to introduce such an incident as this?

It might have happened to anyone hurrying to work in the dreary Euston morning, but it was a policeman on his rounds who noticed a man's finger with a cheap ring upon it impaled on a spike on the top of a gateway. The relic was taken to Scotland Yard Museum, where the finger-print experts identified it as belonging to a notorious ex-convict. A week later a man was arrested at Elephant & Castle as a pickpocket. He asked how he could pick pockets with a hand like that, showing a heavily bandaged hand. At the police office he was found to have lost a finger, and his finger-prints were found to agree with the severed finger.

Modern Art with its perfect instinct for the expressive was bound to come to North o' Euston, and in due course the Cumberland Market School was evoked in which Walter Sickert, from its anxieties, its ennui, its sordid makeshift bedchambers, its ugly wallpapers and hard brittle-faced public-houses, distilled and decanted an essence that will preserve it all for future generations when all that one connotes as North o' Euston has gone. It is going steadily as the rebuilding goes on; it will some day be untenable for the discouraged and needy population that camp round the great stations like a rabble round the city gates who have lost the password.

BARGEES AND WATERMEN

TO REALIZE THE IMMENSITY OF LONDON ONE MUST KNOW that although it is the greatest seaport and port-market in the world, most Londoners have never seen a ship in dock and many have never seen a ship. Only on business do people go to the docks, and very few people have casual business there. To the great majority of Londoners dockland is an unknown country lying to the east that is as far from their thoughts and affairs as Hull or Bristol. People go off by train to embark somewhere for India or Australia or the Cape, there are dock strikes that upset business and give shopkeepers a chance to raise prices, a new dock costing millions is opened by royalty and historical articles on Thames shipping appear in the Press, some benevolent society seeks to raise money by showing parties round selected dock warehouses, subscriptions are asked for seamen's institutes and homes. The War, which recalled to us for a little many of the realities upon which our civilization is based, made us starkly aware of our ships and seamen upon whom we depended for our daily bread, and at the end of it we had a look at the seamen as they rowed in a procession of boats up to the Houses of Parliament; very few of us knew the house-flags of the steamship lines or could visualize the ships they manned. West of Fenchurch Street we never see a ship's officer, although nowadays they are not always in their shore clothes, but wear their honourable uniform although not enthusiastic about its diamond knots. You can discern Jack ashore sometimes lolling up Fleet Street, working his way west, his eyes ranging at about the first story of the buildings, his hands rope-hooky and his new clothes bought through a runner stiff and bad. Most of the seamen paid off in London stay about Commercial Road and are

content with the excellent entertainment and company of Jack's Castle, with an occasional stroll west or an excursion in force, or stay in a body in a lodging-house kept by a man from their home district. Shetland and Orkney seamen, for instance, can usually be found in a good boarding-house kept by an old Shetlander. The seaman is still preyed upon, no doubt, but he has now a better chance than any other stranger in London to live and enjoy himself decently. Only, he is different from a landsman; the abstinences of the sea are not helpful to weak men.

A tramp seaman's London must be a curious place with difficulties and embarrassments all of its own, and extraordinary licence too, for he would probably not see very much difference between one landsman and another. Landsmen are notoriously queer fellows, and you've got to look out, stand by, and don't let them put it across you. Watch them. The sort of incredible thing that seamen propose and often bring to pass in London is illustrated by this story, told to me by one of the men concerned in it.

Six sailormen sat in a Sydney bar talking about such matters as how the mate worked the ship and the right way, when one of them, who had read in a newspaper about the coming coronation of King George, proposed that they should all meet in London and see the procession. The others agreed. Where should they meet? Only one of them knew anything of London, and he told them about Cleopatra's Needle on the North Embankment. It was quite simple. When they got to London they were to work their way west up the north shore till they came to Cleopatra's Needle, and there they would all meet at

six o'clock on coronation morning. Right. It was about nine months to the event. They drew up a document with a penalty clause that the last man to arrive was to *shout* the dinner on coronation night. None of them knew how they would get there, but they each pledged their word. Coronation morning arrived, and at six o'clock one of them was pacing in front of Cleo's needle. He was a Finn. Time wore on and he kept his tryst so faithfully that he was too late to see the procession. The Englishman, who had arrived in a mutton boat two months before his time, spent his money and had to go to sea again. He met the Finn a year afterwards in Bombay and heard of his punctuality and disappointment, and during the War he fell in with the New Zealander and Tasmanian and heard of their bad luck in failing to get ships at the right time. He never heard of the other two.

So when you notice a young, stiffly dressed, brown-faced man with curved hands and eyes ranging on the first story of the houses, it may be that he is going to some appointment that was made long ago in another part of the world with a man he didn't know.

One type of seaman, however, the Londoners do know – those wonderful men whom they see working the barges up and down the river, usually a solitary, rather statuesque figure with one sweep out making her do all sorts of wonderful things, he working one side Father Thames with his current on the other as they manœuvre to shoot the bridge. His is one of the very few callings, old as flint-knappers, that have not altered very much since the first London Bridge was built. He would be at home in the Roman galley, dug up from the foundation of the

London County Hall, that is in the London Museum although he would not like the look of the narrow shell planking. He has his own traditions and sea-learning, river-learning, and canal-learning, and belongs to a community that is almost a race apart. Many of them have been born on barges like their fathers before them, and a moving structure underfoot is more natural to them than the hard land.

We know that bargees live on barges, while lightermen live ashore and work on sailless barges (*dumb* barges) that load goods from ships, and are licensed by the Watermen's Company, but there are very many sorts of bargees and watermen. There are, for instance, barge-folk who are always on canals and never smell salt water, and real sailormen bargees who sail their boats round the coast to Portland or up to Yarmouth. The lightermen, you might say, are the descendants of the wherrymen, the jolly young watermen of Dibdin's song and Marryat's stories; they have to serve an apprenticeship on the river, and every year the lads who have ended their apprenticeship compete together for the Doggett Coat and Badge, a sculling match instituted by Thomas Doggett, actor-manager, to commemorate the accession of George I and the Hanoverian succession. The competitors are often watermen from the villages upriver.

The race provides a jolly London sporting event, rarely noticed except by watermen and fishmongers, the policemen on the Embankment, and people who happen to be on the bridges as the race goes by. It passes London City, Westminster, and Chelsea, and by all the rights of sportsmanship and skill in the element that is supposed to be the Englishman's special

THE SHOT TOWER

concern, it should bring a throng like that at the University boat-race, yet even the devoted sportsmen gathered in Bouverie Street and Tallis Street to wait for evening newspapers with the race results never take a turn down to the Embankment to see it pass. This is strange. If we were to read of the Doggett race with its wonderful gruelling struggles and expert watermanship, as an event of the past, most of us would say: 'Ah, we would like to have seen that. All the fun has gone out of the river nowadays. How dull the Diamond Sculls would look if compared with singles through the crowded river traffic, shooting nine bridges. Yes, that would have been a sight worth seeing! How colourless modern life is to be sure!' Well, every first of August the race is run and the cardinal doublet, breeches, and hose and silver badge of George I pattern are presented to the winner that night at the Fishmongers' Hall. Let me describe one of these noble contests.

At the pistol-shot the six skiffs under London Bridge detached themselves from the boats of advising pot-hatted people that held their stern, and moved swiftly out of the bridge arches into the glancing, chippy water. Several hundred men staring over the bridge shouted 'Hoorah,' and the stout, blue-shirted porters on the wharves and at the warehouse windows also made approving noises. The three steamboats at the Old Swan Pier were all signal-bells and flurry, smoke, and betting cries. A flock of row-boats on the Surrey side were moved to wilder agitation. Bulky men in pot-hats rose in them and cried hoarsely, 'Pocock,' 'Jeffries,' and 'Joe Beckett-Beckett' just as if they were on dry land. Big white and gold clouds sailed overhead in the blue, flags flapped, red-faced men looked out

of the classic stonework of Fishmongers' Hall, the tarnished golden thistle on the top of the monument glinted in the light. Great horses pulling lorries packed high with beer and surmounted by bullet-headed, big-bodied Bacchuses in red caps began to move forward again, men on bus-tops held tight to their hats, and smoke-wreaths from the steamers and the wharves combed themselves out on the face of London City. It was a bustling, hearty scene, brimming with the older side of London life. It might have been a Turner painting. It was, indeed, the very day for Doggett's Coat and Badge race. Our complement on the good steamer *Pepys* was partly made up by coalmen from Erith, bargees from Limehouse, rogue riderhoods, and other riverside characters. Five aquatic bookmakers were in attendance, and on the inviolate Thames fearlessly shouted the odds in the beard of the pier policeman. Pocock of Eton, Joe Beckett of 'Lime'us,' Young Jeffries of Erith, and Rough of Putney were the fancied ones, and Gibson and Bland were any odds you liked. Pocock, however, was the big favourite, and he showed himself the winner from the first, his big, long body in dark green getting clean away at the start (the rest were 'the fie-uld,' by the way, not 'the water' or 'the river,' as the aquatic bookmakers should have known). It would take the Water Poet himself to sing the glories of that great race. Every one agreed that no man could wish to see a better race till the day he died. Off went Pocock in the centre of the river, tossing the spray as high as his head before he steadied to it. Beckett, in white, was close behind, and Rough next. Pocock shot Southwark Bridge well ahead, with the river fairly clear before him, the steamers hurrying well behind, and dodging

round a couple of dumb barges with sweeps out, he went through Blackfriars easily. In the long stretch to Waterloo the race came on a fleet of seven sail of compressed hay well in the fairway, and just at Waterloo we saw that Rough had slipped inside of them, and in smoother water was shooting the southmost arch of the bridge at the same time as Pocock. And so the race went on through the river traffic, each man guiding himself as best he could. At Charing Cross one year the leader found himself suddenly hoist on a whirlpool made by the escaped air from the tunnelling deep below for the Bakerloo tube, but there was no such accident this time. Nor was any competitor struck on the head by a bottle nor pulled out of his boat with boat-hooks by the well-wishers of another competitor, nor upset by them. These things have happened at the Doggett, but it's a long time ago. Nor was any man even impeded on his lawful occasion. High on the bridge of the *Queen Elizabeth*, which carried a Worshipful Company of Fishmongers, stood a man in a cocked hat with a port-wine coat and light blue trousers and a gold badge like a tray on his arm. He was the bargemaster of the company and the father of Pocock, yet never once did he run down any of his son's rivals, nor give them his wash more than is customary. Pocock won by half a dozen lengths, covering the four and a half miles in thirty-three minutes, and he took a turn up the river before he lifted his 6 feet 3 inches of young manhood into the launch. Jeffries and Gibson, who had kept within three lengths of one another for half the course, making spurt after spurt and reducing even the coalmen to speechlessness, so that they couldn't in the end say, '*Dig it, boy – dig it – dig it, my bully boy – hoorah*,' had to be taken

from their boats. The giant young waterman had rowed them out.

I might add as a predella to my picture of that great race a vision given to me of life on the waterside by a young waterman on the steamer, who, like his friends, wore a big red bow to show he was from Erith. After some talk, he said: 'You wouldn't think it, I know, but I'm the only kid on the river what's got twenty-one teapots. That's truth.' His friends said: 'Elfred's got twenty-one teapots, won fair in pairs and fours.' (This referred to the sort of races, not to the teapots.) Asked how his wife liked keeping them all clean, he said: 'This boy ain't got a wife, but ole mother's proud enough – have 'em all out in the little back garden when we 'ave a party – twenty-one of 'em. What have you got to say about that?' No one had anything but good to say about it, so he told how he had won a dinner service. 'Silver?' asked some one. 'How could a dinner service be silver?' asked Elfred. 'I don't know about them things,' said the other, 'but why shouldn't it if it was a big enough race you won?' We passed a crowded tug, and he said: 'See that man – him wi' the P. and O. cap and his foot up on the side. That's Jeffries – father of him what came in second to-day. He's my friend. I sees him over the garden wall every day. Well, that's his father – father of Jeffries what was second for the Doggett to-day.'

The bargemen – the sailor bargemen – too, had their regatta, but it could not be seen from London, and it has the likeness to the watermen's race that very few Londoners ever see it. It is sailed each year from the Medway round the *Mouse* lightship and home, and the cement folk from Chatham and Rochester

and the barge population all along the river make a day of it, if they can. Those who only know barges in their workaday gear, lumbering down the Thames, dirty, mastless, under the guidance of two men with large oars, or coming up heavy laden under a mainsail tucked in at the end of the sprit, do not know what the barge can rise to. Had they seen, as I did one Saturday, a noble seven of them coming round the *Mouse* lightship, with their clean decks and gilt-lined sides, their brown mainsail, white topsail and jib, and perky little brown mizen, all drawing baggily but to fine purpose, they would have been astonished to a demonstrative degree. Even the nautically dressed barge-owners themselves, as from the committee steamer they viewed the race at the turning point, cheered to a man. The boats in the vicinity, and there were many of them, set up a great noise. The steamers whistled with all their horse-power, and a lonely old dredger carrying mud out to sea drew near at the uproar and gave five hoarse toots. Even at that point there was no doubt about the winner, for the holder of the Cup, *Giralda*, put about for the run home nearly a mile ahead of the *Genesta* and *Sara*, which came struggling along together, now one jib ahead, now the other.

The course was a beat down the Medway past the Nore and on to the *Mouse* lightship, and a run home – some 45 miles in all. Eight barges, each of which (one was sorry to see) bore yacht-like names rather than the kindly old ones, put out at a quarter-past eleven from Gillingham Reach. A barge race does not start like a yacht race. As the second gun went the crew, which stood till then impatiently aft, rushed forward, and the boats, which lay in a line a length from each other, broke stay-

sails, shook out their boomless mainsails, and payed off on the wind. No jockeying for position here. The sails were loosened and away they went. The *Sara*, which lay on the weather side of the river, had the first of the wind and the longer slant, so she rushed across the noses of the others in the gallantest way. Thus the race began, with a spirited vocal accompaniment which rose to quite a wild passage when the boats worked down to the floating powder-magazine at Chatham. Here the *Torment*, a smart new boat with a blue stern, which had been first to make sail, fouled the *Genesta* and hung her topmast on the magazine side. As we passed we heard the reproaches of the crew of the *Torment* and of the *Genesta*. It was amazing to see the clever handling of the barges in this narrow channel, the quick way these heavy-looking craft put about, avoiding one another when it seemed impossible and beating quite close into the wind with the big lee-boards they let down from the side – an idea which suggests the origin of the American centre-board. The 22 miles to the *Mouse* were covered by the *Giralda* about two o'clock, which meant, as she sailed about nine miles more in the beat, a pace of about ten miles an hour. Let who will sneer at a barge after that!

The best bit of the race was the keenness of the sailing. After *Giralda* had the lead the others settled down in couples. *Genesta*, which lost about seven minutes by the foul, paired with *Sara*. *Edward VII* and *Philippa* came side by side, and, rather than leave *Thelma* to go her solitary way, *Torment*, with her topmast gone and her sail tucked in to the mast (as though by pins), took a short cut and joined her. The boats watched each other like rival terriers – went, indeed, out of their course trying

to blanket one another. Possibly crew taunted crew, like the Greeks they were. Anyway, they seemed to have a grand time, and one felt almost sorry for the *Giralda* ploughing its lonely furrow. The sea, which had worn a gummy look all morning, turned blue as the sky cleared, and the sun glinting on the barges' sails showed them, some ruddy as the cherry and some light coffee colour, and made their dress topsails and jibs very white.

The wind was blowing steadily. It was a glorious English sight. The barges staggered along before the wind on upright keel, the big jib, kept out by a pole on the opposite side to the mainsail, acting as a kind of spinnaker. Although the wind came and went, the barges went merrily, their weight carrying them on where a yacht would have slackened. *Giralda* arrived a few minutes after five, *Sara*, a length ahead of the *Genesta*, four minutes later. Then, neck and neck, came *Edward VII* and *Philippa*. This was the real excitement. No one could say which was first as they bore to the line. The river was alive with excited bargees (arms round each other's necks) on unsteady boats, and the noise was loud. 'Hurry up – hurry up,' they cried to the stout old person who stood monumentally at the stern of the *Philippa*. But the result was in the hands of the gods and the club committee, who came to the finding that it was a dead-heat. Then there was a great ceremony on the club steamer, presided over by a kindly commodore, who was not quite of a mind whether, after all, we should toss up for the cup – committee-men, guests, and bargees. However, it was handed over to the *Giralda's* owner, and every one seemed to get handsome silver cups. The awarding was, to the uninitiated,

a little puzzling, but it seemed to satisfy the honest bargees, who, one found, were not dressed in white flannels, but in clean white corduroys. The master of the *Giralda*, besides the trinkets, received a large baggy bundle which very soon was revealed as an immense red flag waving at the end of the sprit of the winning barge. Its legend read, 'Medway Challenge Cup.' It was all a long time ago, but when I see a dismasted barge drifting like a lighter down through the bridges I can see again the noble squadron of brown sails.

THE ROAD VIEW AND THE AIR VIEW

IN THE LATER VICTORIAN ERA THE AVERAGE MIDDLE-CLASS Londoner with the development of the suburban railways and the advent of the Underground Railway lost the extensive knowledge of London which his gig-driving and long-walking father had, and, apart from his own district and bus route, he knew London chiefly from railway carriage windows. The old coaching highways to the East Coast by Whitechapel, to Dover by the Borough and Shooter's Hill, to the Great North Road by Barnet, to Oxford by Uxbridge, to Portsmouth by Kingston and Cobham, all were forgotten. The outer ring of London was invaded only by delivery vans, and few people could tell any roadway out of town except the way to the Derby. Who could tell of the long-decayed rambling inns, like the White Hart at Godstone, where horses were changed for the last stage coming into London? Or how Charles Dickens went on his night strolls from Doughty Street to Gadshill? London roadcraft was dying away, the old road *itineraries* were closed and forgotten like most of the old coaching inns on the great highways. Cycling revived road interest among the younger men, but the real revival was to come.

About the beginning of the century came the motor-car, at first with a red flag carried by a walker in front of it, then without such assistance. The pioneers came to know the outer suburbs well and the possibilities of repair work at each suburb; but better engines and better roads came quickly, and after the War, when tens of thousands of young men used to motor-cars and motor-cycles came back to civilian life, the motor public found itself an enormous force ranging from the millionaire to the artisan. The public were on the road again, using skill and

cunning to find the best ways out of London to their journey's end, and learning the districts like the old stage-coachman. Then the motor char-à-banc thundered on the scene and the long-distance motor-bus extended its routes. Every Londoner began to know something of the lie of land in London and how suburb telescoped into suburb on the big roads, where the hills were and where the busy cross-roads, where the barrages of factory workmen set in as the dinner or closing hour whistle blew, and the talk in many a home and club turned back to the road again, and how to weasle out of London, north, south, east and west, with the fewest possible obstructions. London has lost something of the grand isolation that had come to her with the accomplishment of the railway era, as a country by itself, connected with the rest of the land by straight steel lines. The new generation see London rather as a great centre and conglomeration of towns on roads leading to other towns. It seems in a new way part of England – a place you can detour or pass through on your way elsewhere. The motor-car has made London a smaller place.

The aeroplane has made it yet smaller. It gave, of course, a new vision of London, unknown before, except to those rare souls who had gone up in the Crystal Palace balloons or taken part in the exploits of the Hurlingham Balloon Club, and then it was not quite the same as looking down from the purposeful aeroplane emerging from the clouds, or from the side of an airship.

My first sight of London from the air in war-time from a big Handley-Page machine, left a very definite impression. I was on the rear platform, and it is interesting to see cities from this

PORTLAND PLACE

point of view. When flying over other places on the front seat the machine seemed to be eating up the land below. From the rear one saw the terrestrial world drifting away as if one were saying good-bye for ever. Looking down on London with this emotion, the last impression one had was of civilization as a terrible sausage-machine which received humanity and pressed it out into close, red, squirmy residue.

The streets of Hampstead and Camden Town, with their coiled, elongated crescents and curving roadways and circuses, were close, compact, and essential as though produced under tremendous pressure. In some places the backs of the houses in different streets seemed almost to touch. The garden suburb was a pretty geometrical pattern, like a toy village on an æsthetic architect's plan. It seemed impossible that a world like this could have created anything so symmetrical and decent. The only other symmetrical thing I noticed was a disc of dull silver. I was looking down at the moment between the wooden spars of the cage that I stood on. It glimmered curiously, and I thought for the moment that some one had dropped a half-crown. Then I saw that we were over the round pond in Kensington Gardens. Bloomsbury was close-set thickets of dull rosy hue. Hyde Park, Regent's Park, and Kensington Gardens made a huge grey-green oasis among the tiles and slates. We did not go over St. Paul's, but curved round the north of it. Milan Cathedral, I remember, looked from above like a wonderful intricate shell on a little green cloth; Venice was the colour of old cork with the canals twining like pieces of wire as though the gods indeed had made merry there and drunk deep. But St. Paul's looked a lop-sided, crooked

building, butting up with its dark dome like a turquoise set in its silvery intricate setting of Portland stone. How wonderfully blue-white the Portland stone of London is from the top, and yet how the whole fleet of Wren's spires are lost in the smoky sea of London, and how few of them could be discerned!

The river was bright enough – the traitorous Thames which has signalled London to the enemy by day and night. For all the smoke, it proclaimed its presence, gleaming sullenly in all its twists and writhes like an ancient eel. Even when the Crystal Palace ceases to refract and the skylights do not twinkle, old Father Thames turns his bleary eye to the sky and winks to the enemy in the air. He is older than England, and only cares for sport. The bridges over the Thames seem fragile, thready things. Even the Tower Bridge, with its mock-turtle Gothic fabric, took its place in the airscape as a delicate, modulated structure. I could not discern a flag in Whitehall. It was curious to see how the smoke of London seemed to stop about 600 feet from the ground, and how it lay in a circle of the Thames Valley, with the clouds browsing on the hills around it.

A stranger view of London from above comes on days when your machine has been flying high and you have been travelling over the clouds. I shall never forget a wonderful passage from Paris, at 9,000 feet up for the main part, over a world of clouds in sunshine, sierras of pale amber and purple; nothing else could be seen but a long gap in the distance over the Channel. Where was London? We descended sharply. One last look back over the sunlit glories that blushed and bloomed and we were down into the cloud-floe, wriggling through milky

whiteness that streamed past, and down into a darkened chamber with a dull-green carpet on its floor, and the twin-towers of Crystal Palace as ornaments on a shelf of smoke.

London does seem a small place when you come down to it from the heavens!

'GONE!'

LONDON IS THE AUCTION-ROOM OF THE WORLD, AND BY WAY of business it is constantly selling off itself. Somewhere the hammer is always falling: 'Going! Going! Gone!' The items fall; the last of the great City mansions that had survived from Plantagenet times, a famous theatre, an inn of Chancery, a prison, a historic school, the General Post Office, an entertainment palace, a City church, hotels and taverns with long pedigrees, a meeting-house. Any Londoner of twenty years' standing can remember the passing of every one of these, for after the auctioneer's hammer falls on such unportable property the housebreaker's pickaxe is soon heard and it tumbles down like London bridges and penny rolls. And in a few years we are disputing over its site as though it had happened before the Great Fire. Events march quickly in London once they march at all, and memories are short, as befits a trading capital.

Hurricanes of 'development' have swept over districts that for one reason or other had survived their money-making service, and in a year these parts have been so transformed that recent tenants lose their way in them. Many of these places had kept their good looks, despite shabbiness, to the last, and the sentimental Londoner regretting their passing must often have wished that they could have been somehow turned out to grass like a favourite horse that had done fine service in his day. Something of the kind, indeed, was done with the great city mansion, Crosby Hall, that was so carefully conveyed from St. Helen's and set up in Chelsea by the river near the site of Sir Thomas More's garden. And many a piece of old London has been sent out of town. Old Temple Bar is now the entrance to Theobald's Park, and some day the present owner may soften

his heart and agree to return it to the City as an Embankment gateway to the Temple. The Seven Dials column, round which so much of London's vice and poverty had convened, now preens itself on Weybridge Green and pretends to be a memorial of a pious royal duchess. The queerest transference of all was accomplished by a City contractor who settled in Swanage and brought there all sorts of London fragments. But perhaps those old house-fronts and obelisks should be regarded, not so much as London relics living out their old age in the sea-coast town, but rather as old Dorsetshire natives retiring to their birthplace after years of hard service in London, bearing all their City airs and City stains upon them. Here surely is subject for a poet!

But the list of such escapes is, of course, a very short one, and the record of notable casualties seems to grow larger each year to make up for the lull in the War. The appetite of the destroyers sharpens with exercise, for now Waterloo Bridge and several of the City churches are demanded, although one cannot help noticing how many things have been bitten off and left unconsumed. In St. Martin's Street, off Leicester Square, there was a comely little house with some curious features, one of which was a cut-away in an attic ceiling to allow free play to a telescope; the man who had lain and gazed through the telescope there was Isaac Newton. It was a polite old place with many small panelled rooms, and it was easy to visualize its later tenants, Fanny Burney and her father, there. The house was sold during the War and broken up, all but the ground floor, a melancholy stump of an honourable roof-tree, and so it has remained till to-day. Very greedy!

A favourite exercise of eighteenth-century architects – Soane

DISSOLUTION OF EGYPTIAN HALL

devoted much of his time and gifts to it – was the designing of ideal compositions of buildings that never were built. As one muses over the lost London buildings that stand out in one's perambulations of twenty odd years and are now as if they had never been, they group in a mental composition until it seems almost as though half the character of the London one first knew had vanished off the earth. They compose oddly in one's memory, not by architectural importance or size or by their history, but rather by the vividness of the colour they gave to the pattern of London enrolled in one's memory. I shall rather neglect the show-pieces and record the more curious buildings that have gone and the manner of their going.

There is, for a beginning, old St. James's Hall in Piccadilly, unimportant except as a London institution. Over its dust and ashes played a rainbow of vividly contrasted memories. To some of us it meant the music of Joachim and Sarasate, to others Sammy Bones and Jim the Cornerman, and the laughter of children who have now ceased to take much interest in their birthdays; to others the aftermath of the Boat-race and a smashed hat. The shade of its memories depended on whether St. James's Hall was to you 'The Concert' or 'The Minstrels' or 'Jimmy's.' When the housebreakers were in the thick of their work they were much annoyed by relic-seekers, but it was impossible to say to which of these three sections the seekers belonged. Another place of popular resort that one did not know properly how to place was the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, that went in the same year. It was about a hundred years old, with a façade supposed to be in the form of an Egyptian temple, and it had from the beginning harboured natural and artificial

curiosities. In it the allegorical painter Haydon brooded in his empty exhibition while fashionable London thronged to the other entrance to see Tom Thumb, and at last he came out and blew away his brains. Haydon's Diary keeps his memory alive, but Albert Smith, who lectured there, and Artemus Ward, who introduced American humour to an appreciative England, are almost forgotten. The earlier years of the New English Art Club brought honour to the hall – Wilson Steer, John Sargent, James Guthrie, Augustus John, William Rothenstein, and William Orpen showed some of their best work there. But Maskelyne and Cooke brought fame. It vanished with its stucco monoliths and gods and goddesses like one of the acts of those great illusionists and a huge stone building appeared in its place. Then, there was Exeter Hall with its tall dark portal that one somehow associated with Charles Keene's drawings in *Punch*. To me the Strand will never be the same when there is no fullness of black-coated figures in May breaking into streams to spread like spilt ink all over the neighbourhood.

An Inn of Court is a rarity in any auctioneer's list. It seems to stand for permanency and law without end. Yet two have gone in this century. Old Serjeants' Inn, that adjoined Clifford's Inn – which itself is now a dead limb of the law that the gardener of Limbo has forgotten – and New Inn in Wych Street, have gone. I remember a lethargic, seedy crowd in the square of New Inn, and a rapid auctioneer knocking down to them the stone, the lime, the windows, the woodwork, the chimneys, and the lamps of that musty old legal hostelry. Of all the Inns of Court the New Inn could be spared with least regret. Although it is said that the students of the Strand Inn rested here after

they had been routed thence by the great Duke of Somerset when he built the palace whose site is now covered by Somerset House, it had little of antiquity or beauty to recommend it. A dingy square, with a rather quaint little hall, and a squat ash tree, surrounded by a grass-plot, in the centre, formed the whole Inn. Some of the houses were of Queen Anne's time, and there was at least one picturesque turret corner. But the whole effect had none of the urbane charm of the large Inns. During the sale it looked particularly forlorn, with its doors chalked for execution. There was a wealth of suggestion in 'Lot 169,' marked on a door where generations of litigants, with all their hopes and fears, had knocked. Even the very pavements had been torn up and stones propped against the wall as samples for purchasers. Up the narrow staircases with the heavy twisted rails the crowd of brokers swarmed to examine the few old lamps and grates, and in one or two places the fine classic carving over fireplaces. These chambers, many of which had been shut for years, were strange places to go into. A cat which was sunning itself among old law papers in one room appeared to be too much astonished at the intrusion even to put its back up. A pigeon at one window refused to believe that there were real people about, and perched quite still until some one put the window up to let clean air into the ghostly rooms. It was the very dickens of a place.

It was all carted away like so many decayed, curious, romantic relics that stood in the way of the Strand to Holborn scheme that gave us Aldwych and Kingsway. Its operations acted as a sort of delayed action mine exploding piece by piece destroying the whole formation of the district, wiping out Wych Street

with its Caroline picturesqueness and bawdry, blemishing the strange dusty seignorial precinct of Lincoln's Inn Fields. It took the Sardinian Embassy Chapel with its triple gallery and memories of the Gordon rioters and the old dark archway beneath it, and (the other day) a discreet small tavern, the Ship, at the corner of Little Turnstile, where in the troubled times the priest said mass to an apprehensive congregation with pots of porter before them lest the rioters break in.

The loss in this neighbourhood, however, that as a sentimental Londoner and a humble lover of beauty I most deplore, did not come about through the Strand to Holborn operations, but in the usual way through a change of ownership. It was something one selfishly kept apart as a London sight for friends worthy of it. Just as there are pools in some Highland rivers that the gamekeeper keeps to himself and never tells the castle or speaks of at the village inn, so in London there are quiet, secret places that your true Londoner hugs to himself, and, even if he be a writing-man, restrains his pen lest the dealers swoop down with their lures and drags to catch his treasures, or the curious public come in hordes and the owners make the place inaccessible. Such a place is – or rather was, for its noble staircase is gone, and although its architecture has been repaired and preserved, its whole character is changed – that large, gloomy house, No. 35, Lincoln's Inn Fields, which turns an obdurate face upon that almost deserted pleasaunce. It is a four-storied building of early eighteenth-century character, and superficially the mansion seems of little interest, although the height of the first story, with its central window draped, as it were, in a long periwig, hints at something. You went through a wide, domed passage

into a darkened hall, whence arose the most astonishing staircase in London – if Wren's great geometrical staircase in St. Paul's is excepted. It was of the same character – an open staircase in a great round well, with the stairs supported only at their jointing in the wall and their pressure on one another, there being no central newel or support of any kind. Is there anything more graceful in England than the beautiful (almost unknown) stair in the south tower of St. Paul's, with its delicate leaf-like curves and its mystery of lighting? The stair in Lincoln's Inn was almost as graceful, with a steeper wave of its four flights. It was like a fine Piranesi drawing, with its apparent defiances of the laws of gravity and its strange accidents of lighting from the top dome and from lights from doorways left open on the landings. The ironwork was worthy of it. It was believed to be the production of a London smith in the early eighteenth century, who was a disciple of the great Tijou, the French smith who made the ironwork of St. Paul's and Hampton Court. Perhaps it was the work of Huntingdon Shaw. The balustrading of the first flight and landing was of the lyre pattern, embellished with acanthus leaves in repoussé work. It was carefully taken to pieces and presented by the new owners of the building to the Victoria and Albert Museum. The house is much the poorer by the disappearance of this enchanting staircase, but something remains there of the formal spirit and beauty of the early eighteenth century, of the pot-pourri elegance of Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, while most of its companions have vanished suddenly and violently like the lives of the men who died on the scaffold outside in Lincoln Fields.

There are strange things in the old house. In the back rooms,

which are not more spacious than the ordinary London drawing-room, there are on two floors noble open screens composed of tall fluted Ionic columns supporting three arches like a triptych in a Highmore picture. The doors in the big rooms are impressive structures, with columns and pediments and cushion mouldings, and the lighting is curiously broken with these stately screens and with the eccentric window-frames. In its older form there was something uniquely formal and gloomy and periwigged about the whole building, with its lofty rooms and its great mysterious curtsying staircase. When I first visited it, many years ago, an old clerk there, who darted out of one of the doors of the secret-looking lawyers' offices that opened on the landing as an old pike might dart out of a recess in a quiet, deep pool, developed almost human qualities and supported with some heat his view that it was Wren himself who designed that staircase before he completed the great staircase in St. Paul's, just as he tried his 'prentice dome at St. Stephen's, Walbrook, before tackling the great dome of St. Paul's. But every detail of this house spoke of Lord Burlington's taste. It was, indeed, designed by Robert Taylor about 1730.

Its staircase is now in South Kensington Museum, and there, too, are some relics of another fine old London house that – probably in common with many another amateur of London – one deceived oneself at first in thinking a personal discovery. That was the old house in Botolph Lane that by local legend was once the house of Wren.

You turned off one of the little fishy lanes that stagger down from Eastcheap to the back of the Monument, through a large

square entry just big enough to admit a decent-sized wagon with a careful driver, which led to a small neglected court cobbled with very old stones that were probably even older than the soberly beautiful seventeenth-century London mansion that stood with two warehouses as supporters facing the entry. It was said to have been the residence of Sir Christopher Wren. London is inexhaustible in surprises, but the existence of this mansion in the heart of the City, and not a word of it in the thousands of books that have been written about London, was both a surprise and a mystery. The date '1670' was carved above the great staircase.

The most striking thing in the interior was the spaciousness of the hall and stairway, which went back the depth of the house. The hall, which was about 30 feet deep, was paved with chequers of black and white marble, and the oaken staircase had finely carved balustrades and balusters. On the ground floor there was one interesting room, with painted panels and a rich plaster ceiling. These paintings are signed 'R. Robinson, 1696.' Redgrave knows no English painter of that name in the seventeenth century, and possibly this is all that is preserved of his works. It was dim at all times in the old mansion, but on the dull afternoon of my first visit the rooms were very dark. The caretaker ran his candle up and down the panels, giving glimpses of strange figures clad in feathers and skins, of rhinoceroses and monkeys and lions and curious trees – 'That's the tobacco tree,' said the caretaker about one of them; 'party come from Ameriky knew it when he saw it, and told me,' – serpents, and mysterious groups of armed men. I took it that the artist's subject was possibly the legend of Pocahontas, which must have been an

old favourite at the time. The upstairs rooms had been considerably altered, and all that remained of their old beauty was the richly carved doorways. A door on the top floor led to the flat leaden roof, still haunted by pigeons. If Wren had ever come there to take the air he would have seen the Monument rise straight before him, most of his fifty churches, and the dome of St. Paul's in the making. Here he could have brooded like a god over his mighty works. It had been used as a house up to the fifties of last century, and in its last years it was a school.

'Gone!' There were some things one was not so sorry to see go. One said good-bye gladly to Old Newgate Prison, although it was a work of art designed with terrible significance by the elder Dance, who took his inspiration, they say, from the *Carceri* series of Piranesi. It was a black romantic old pile that looked more like a stronghold of Crime than a building where honest men were on top and the knaves had no say; the nightmare iron door on the front wall made to imitate stone (it could hardly have deceived a blindfolded man – not the blindfolded men who were led through it!); the leering old Caroline statues of Flora and Ceres and those other stony virgins who used to stand in niches on the terrible wall; the little spiky gates – the whole menacing thing has gone and in its place is a sort of Renaissance palace with lace-curtained windows. The prisoners now live at Brixton, and there is no place but the dock for them in the New Newgate. You felt sorry for George Selwyn, the amateur of the macabre, who did not live to see the sale of Newgate.

Behind the façade of Newgate and the floor of the yard there

DAWN, NEWGATE PRISON

was a space of a foot or so that went down to the foundations, some sort of device to make escape more difficult. This was a graveyard of pigeons. The warders had different theories. One said the pigeons – they flew about Newgate over the Murderers' Walk (how the prisoners in the Exercise Yard must have followed them with their eyes!) – slept on the top of the wall, and the older ones would fall or be knocked off their perch and drop into the space and be unable to flutter up, and after a bit would be still; so even to the birds Newgate became a prison and an execution.

The sale of the Old Bailey relics was carried through in an orderly enough manner, but the scene in the old court during the auction and in the cells and rooms in the preceding hour was a piece of that leering, grotesque humour that a London crowd understands perhaps better than any crowd in the world. It gambolled and guffawed down in the cells, yet with plenty of mock-decorum and a good deal of rough satire that Hogarth would have liked. How well he could have drawn the scene of the bored auctioneer selling the judge's bench, with the royal arms above it, for six guineas – bid from the dock, I think – and of men bidding for the gallery, over which generations of friends and relatives had craned and sweated and cursed its angles as they tried to peep at the prisoner in the dock. The reporters' seats, the counsels' seats, the benches of the jury and witnesses, were knocked down for the old wood they were. Then came the gems of the collection – Lord George Gordon's cell (£5), Jack Sheppard's alleged grating (£7 10*s*.); then, most delicious of all to the amateur of horror, the worn, old dock – £10! Three men struggled hard for it. It was crowded with

sightseers at the time, with red, jocund faces. Hogarth could certainly have made a masterpiece of that.

Sometimes the sales are heart-breaking, for something is going that is unique in our world yet no buyer can buy it. Such a commodity was Beazeley's old Lyceum Theatre of Henry Irving in the lifetime of Irving, when his financial affairs had exiled him from London. Many of the old Lyceum properties, even play-parts, were in the sale, and in the dark, damp purlieus behind the scenes – where King Edward and Mr. Gladstone so astonishingly went – cases of old playbills and letters lay about, many on the floor that it was no one's business to examine. I noticed a letter of Edmund Kean's that must have been one of Henry Irving's treasures, and bundles of letters, probably only partly read, that belonged to some American tour, most queer gawky letters from youths in stores and offices, ambitious to go on the stage, written in stilted stagey language breaking down into slang. Something Irving had said in his speech at the reception at the Literary Athenæum or something in his eye as he came to this or that passage in *The Merchant of Venice* seemed to have been intended for the writer, so he presumptuously, and so on, all lying on the muddly floor of the Lyceum on the sale-day. What had become of those young store-clerks and mechanics in the distant continent whose ambitions had flared like tinder as Irving passed through these humdrum lives and places with his dark fire? I never saw so many elderly men with the mien of supers from romantic poetic plays as tramped about the Lyceum rooms and passages that day, or so many men that looked both grotesque and sad. A tall tower had fallen.

For some secondary reason one associates Irving's Lyceum with another London institution much approved of Americans, highly respected and unchangeable, that could not live beyond its era. Morley's Hotel in Trafalgar Square, having outlived the age of hotel privacy, sold itself off, and its shell now houses the showrooms and offices of a Dominion. The sale was a sad sight, for Morley's triumphed over its position on the 'best site in Europe' so thoroughly that it remained exclusive, almost secret, to the end. No ordinary visitor ever dreamt of ringing up Morley's – it had a telephone – even if all other hotels were full; no one gave a dinner there; no one 'frequented' its smoking-room. Although its clients were mainly American, it had no cocktail bar. It lived its life apart from the 'Hotel Splendids' of modern Babylon. It had about a hundred bedrooms with a Bible in each, but its dining-room would hardly seat forty people. Its long, darkened corridors, broken by corners and flights of steps, led to small suites of rooms with rosewood tables and curly walnut easy-chairs in crimson Utrecht velvet. The hotel kitchen was so small that one got the impossible idea that the guests' servants cooked for their own gentry. Feather beds and bolsters, lace antimacassars, and candlesticks figured in the sale, but there were no antiques beyond mid-Victorian times.

Wallpaper with art vegetables and late Edwardian fireplaces had altered the faces of the rooms without making them modern. The early Victorian fireplaces rallied in the attics and went down with the ship. If the sale ever got into the American papers, old-fashioned Americans would recall first visits to London and remember – as Henry James remembered – how they had looked

out of Morley's into the blue mists and lamps of Trafalgar Square and took a first deep draught of London.

Morley's was perfect of its kind, like the Lyceum. It was mid-Victorian, worthy and dependable, with no fal-lals and no need to explain itself. There was another sort of hostelry that fell to the hammer in numbers during the last few years as banks and tea-shops began more eagerly to prowl about in the City. I would single out the Ship and Turtle in Leadenhall Street as typical of many good houses that have vanished like Falstaff's Boar's Head in East Chepe. It was an elderly tall building of a faded greenish-yellow, tightly strapped at each story with something of the look of an old City retainer who has given up his livery as every one knows him by headmark. A roomy passage decorated by large turtle-shells with gilt dates on them led to a stair at the foot of which was a very high, dim smoking-room. As you drank your coffee you became aware through the smoke of what seemed large tapestry panels hung along one side of the room. It was a solemn, leisurely place; the men who sat around comfortable, possibly tubby. By and by you perceived a strange thing – there was movement in one of the panels, faint yet unmistakable. When you went nearer a more disquieting vision appeared ; in the centre of the greenish panel was an uglier thing than ever Cruikshank drew, a huge, fattish body with marks on its back as though for carving, out of which an impossible little viper's head hung or raised itself, and shapeless flappers which made now and then a languid tap on the water. It was, of course, a turtle awaiting its invitation to an aldermanic feast. Probably each tank had one.

If you asked the waiter how long the turtles floated there in

the water regarding the smoking man, with their small, vacant eyes, it was a thousand chances to one that he would say: 'It all depends, sir. It is, you might say, a case of here to-day gone to-morrow with them turtles.' That was the official reply at this famous establishment, just as the thin waiter at the Cheshire Cheese Tavern replies to the diner who asks how they can have the heart to put larks in their puddings: 'These are not the singing variety, sir.' The turtle usually floated slantwise, a dark ghostly mushroom in his green cavern. But if you did not know that he was a turtle, and had to puzzle out the vision through the smoky air, it was an uncanny business. Bibulous, short-sighted men, it was said, had signed the pledge through a single movement from the flapper of what was, after all, only calipash and calipee.

On the last day, when all its mysteries were unveiled, it was strange exploration to its old customers who came to pick up a relic or two. The service-rooms, dressing-rooms, still-rooms, Masonic temple, larders, kitchens with their wonders of troughs and hot plates, cabinet-pudding moulds and turtle-soup boilers, all open to the hoarse and honest brokers' men who marched over carpets that had been trodden by some of the greatest merchants in the Candlewick Ward. In one darkened room were chessboards and chessmen worn and dignified by constant usage in business hours.

Possibly some of the old customers in the house were among the horde that sniffed and barged about the place. But how different their thoughts! Here, perhaps, their fathers had brought them when they were young, bright lads entering the business, secure in the thought that they were the governor's

son. In this room they had had such a chop or steak. In that grander room under the mid-Victorian furniture-man's conception of an Empire mantelpiece they had had such a trout and that bottle of '67 claret such as you don't taste nowadays. Perhaps their fingers had toyed with one of the '24 stem grogs,' perhaps even some of the '51 hollow-stem champagne.' The great rooms looked gaunt and sad that day for all their gilding.

The auctioneer swings his hammer every day in the homes of the old Sedleys and Veneerings and Surfaces of our time. Every now and then he opens the door of a famous house and the crowd comes to gape and get in the way of the buyers. There is usually some resemblance between these dishevelled, carpetless houses with their intimate things taken away by the family and the heavy ornamental objects and bedroom and kitchen furniture remaining, but a word must be said about two exceptional sales in notable houses. One was the breaking up of that most hospitable house in London, the bow-fronted old brick house at the corner of Piccadilly and Stratton Street, where the Baroness Burdett-Coutts had lived for three-quarters of a century. At its top corner window Queen Victoria sometimes sat watching like a child the stream of traffic in Piccadilly. 'Yours is the only place where I can go,' Queen Victoria said to the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, 'to see the traffic without stopping it.' For all her life the august lady could only by stealth see London moving!

How much social history in hero-worship, in fashion, in philanthropy, in sentiment, in art, was embedded in the strata of generations in that famous house in Piccadilly then being so casually quarried out and dispersed throughout London. So

much of the sale seemed to be fossils. A gilt shrine containing a set of four-inch carved wood figures of Austrian nobles – the gift of the Archduchess Elizabeth of Austria – a pair of 'important life-sized bronze Egyptian figures with coloured onyx drapery,' an umbrella, a coloured print of Hamlet in frame, an ivory group of faggot-gatherer, beggar and poodle, black marble model of Cleopatra's Needle, carved Swiss casket containing an address, three carved models of birds in glass cases, a globular timepiece with seated figure of Napoleon kicking the globe, an engraved African gourd, and four gold scarf-rings and gentlemen's brooches – these were among the fossils, and the dealers there on business and West End people there to see fair play proved the slump by paying very little even for the great chandeliers and carpets and rugs and bookcases.

Some of the items sold did not look the least like fossils. The strangest of these was a 'gentleman's cowhide leather dressing-bag, part silver-mounted fittings,' of an ancient shape, with capacious, well-strapped outside pockets, well worn, particularly in the bottom, as though it had fallen off diligences and slipped half-way down the Alps on one of old Coutts's journeys. It looked strong enough to carry half a hundredweight of gold, and, powerfully framed though it was, it had had contents that dragged it out of shape. Yes, it looked the sort of bag that old Coutts might have gone marketing with all over Europe.

The other home sale was of furniture and effects of the late Miss Marie Lloyd. Her house in its way had been almost as hospitable as the Baroness's. But Marie of the Open Hand had died without leaving enough of all the tens of thousands she had earned to buy a grave for her body, and the funeral, to

which tens of thousands went – while half the taverns in London tied crape to their mirrors and nearly all the music-hall men in Leicester Square and York Road came out in black neckties, an honour they had done to no one since King Edward died – was paid for by outsiders. And the sale of her home that quickly followed deepened the feelings aroused by her funeral. Nothing in the house from attic to basement suggested that any person in particular had ever lived there. All the furniture might have been ordered in a hurry from the average shop in Tottenham Court Road, by the average colourless person, and then ill-used. One searched the place for anything characteristic of the most racy and idiosyncratic artist of the century. But there was nothing in the 'semi-Carlton writing-table,' 'carved blackwood Oriental shaped jardinière stands with marble centres,' and 'Austrian decorated china plaques' and the rest of it, that suggested anything but a seaside hotel. There were no memorials for the auctioneer to sell and the faithful to buy. That great comic spirit of lower London had revealed its life with lark and jest across the town, and vanished leaving nothing material behind, only a rare enrichment by her art of the inarticulate life of her generation. And lower London knew and mourned at her funeral and put crape on its bars.